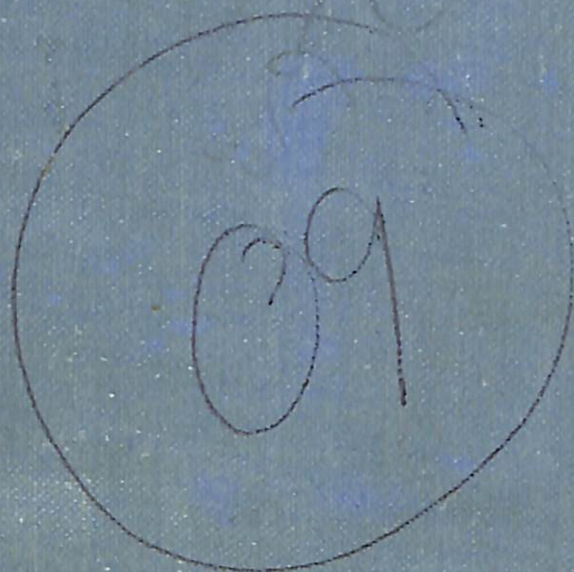
THE PERFECT MASTER

SHRI MEHER BABA





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SHRI MEHER BABA, LONDON, 1931

The
PERFECT MASTER

THE LIFE OF
SHRI MEHER BABA

by

C. B. PURDOM

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS



PREFACE

I HAVE written this life of Shri Meher Baba at the request of his Indian followers, and mainly from material supplied by them. The first Part is based on the unpublished life compiled by K. J. Dastur, and the diaries of Behli J. Irani, with the addition of other material. For the second and third Parts I have had the benefit of various documents, diaries, and papers lent to me by Indian and Western followers.

The book might have been extended, but I have kept it within modest limits. It does not pretend to be a study made on the spot nor to be anything but a preliminary and tentative account of Baba for Western readers. I claim nothing for it except that I have done my best to make it objective.

I suggest that readers may find it useful for the understanding of what follows to read Part III before they start on the first and second Parts of the book, reading the third Part again in its sequence; for in that Part I have done my best to explain the significance of Baba and his methods of working.

It remains for me to say that I owe thanks to many people in India and in England for help in the preparation of the book and for the loan of diaries, etc., and that my special thanks are due to F. H. Dadachanji.

C. B. PURDOM

LONDON, 1934–6



THE PERFECT MASTER

PART I

THE PREPARATION

THIS will be found a strange book, all the more strange because the story that it tells has not reached its end. It is the story of a man whose life will appear incomprehensible, a life in which the contradictions of normal values and actions are prominent. Yet this man says, "I am God," and his mission is to change the world, though he neither speaks nor writes nor even seeks to get followers. It will arouse controversy, and I have no doubt that it will be misunderstood. I have written the story, however, as soberly and plainly as if it were the record of ordinary, everyday events.

The title "Perfect Master" is that by which Shri Meher Baba, the subject of this book, is known. It means one who has himself reached the goal to which he leads or directs others. It means a teacher who has practised his own teachings and attained its fruits. It means one who, pointing to God, has himself realized God.

In India the idea of holy or divine men is common. The practice of spirituality is the sole life task of many thousands of men and many women, and the claim to have become what one aspires to be spiritually is frequently made. That the people of India are disposed to expect holiness and to acknowledge divinity is not to be regarded as ignorant superstition. It should rather be respected as the tradition of a people taught to recognize worth. To us in the West the atmosphere that makes possible the recognition of such qualities hardly exists. Our age is poor in personalities. Science,

which is a democratic and levelling influence, has reduced whatever we once had of aristocratic culture into little more than mere credulity. Therefore it is difficult for us to accept a man who claims more than ordinary human qualities, and who by virtue of that which transcends mere "I am"-ness requires to be acknowledged. Yet that is Shri Meher Baba.

PARENTAGE

Shri Meher Baba[1] is Merwan Sheheriarji Irani, born at Poona, India, in 1894. Merwan's parents, as his surname declares, were Persians. His father was Sheheriarji Mundegar Irani, born in Khooramshah, a village in Persia, in the year 1840. Sheheriarji was the son of the keeper of the Zoroastrian tower of silence, which belonged to his native village. The family was poor, and Sheheriarji's mother died when he was five; the boy spent his days with his father looking after the place to which human corpses are brought to be devoured by vultures.[2]

At thirteen years of age Sheheriarji left his father and became a monk. He could neither read nor write and had had no schooling whatever; but he made up his mind to lead a life of renunciation and meditation, and for eight years, consumed with the desire for truth, he roamed over Persia as a dervish, wearing the ochre robe of a monastic life. He found that this was not bearing the desired fruit, so with his brother he went to India, landing in Bombay, where they both got work. After five months Sheheriarji left his employment, and, keeping two rupees of the pay due to him, having

[1] "Shri" is a title meaning "holy," "Meher" means "merciful," or in Persian "sun," and is the name by which he was called as a child, "Baba" means "father."

[2] These Persian towers of silence, dakhma, are built always on the outskirts of the towns. The Zoroastrians believe this method of disposing of the dead to be the least harmful to the living.

given the rest away, he became a monk again. For ten years he wandered throughout India with his wooden bowl and staff. This second experience of renunciation seemed no more fruitful than the first. He did not gain spiritual beatitude. In despair he returned to Bombay and went to his sister Piroja's house. There he stayed, still leading a religious life. It is said that he was told in a dream that what he wanted was not destined for him.

His sister wished him to marry and bring up a family, and so persistent was she that Sheheriarji pretended to have fallen in love with the daughter of an Irani named Dorabji Khoramshahi. This girl was no more than six years old, and Sheheriarji was over thirty; he was sure that her father would not give her to him. He said he would marry no one else, however, and Piroja had to bring off the match so as to carry out her intentions. She succeeded in getting the consent of the parents, for Sheheriarji was regarded as a holy man, and it was agreed that the marriage should take place when the girl had grown up. Eight years later, in 1879, when Shirinbanoo was fourteen and Sheheriarji thirty-nine, the marriage took place.

It was a happy and successful marriage. When he became engaged Sheheriarji turned his attention to earning a living. He first worked as a gardener, then took charge of an estate, and afterwards opened a tea-shop. He also began to educate himself, learned to read and write his own Persian language, also Arabic, Gujarati, and Marathi. He became a singer and a poet, writing hymns used by the Zoroastrian Community. His wife, Shirinbanoo, is "as intelligent as she is fair," says one who knows her; and also understands four languages. The first child, Jamshedji, was born in 1893; he died in 1926. The second child was Merwan, who became Shri Meher Baba, born in 1894: three other sons followed, Jal, Behram,

and Ardeshir, and one daughter, Mani. Sheheriarji died in 1932.

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

Merwan was born at five o'clock in the morning on February 25, 1894, and according to the Indian astrologers under auspices that indicated his destiny as a Master. His name soon became abbreviated to Meher, by which he is now known. Meher was brought by his mother from the David Sassoon Hospital in Poona, where he was born, to No. 816 Butler Moholla, a house which his father had bought and repaired. The house is small, thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, containing two rooms of equal size, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a garret. It was in this house that Meher passed his childhood and early manhood, except for a period of two years when he lived with his parents and brothers in a flat in the Bhagwandas Chawl.

The childhood of Meher was happy. But the years were uneventful, though the story is told that when he was about eleven months old, just able to walk, his mother saw him in the compound of the house playing with a cobra, which had entwined itself about the child's body. Shirinbanoo screamed and the cobra disappeared, leaving the child unharmed. Naturally the mother and those who were called on to the scene by her cry thought that the incident had some significance in relation to Meher's future.

Those who knew him in childhood say that he was active and mischievous, but noted for his gentleness and unselfishness. His favourite haunts were Mahommedan burial-grounds and the neighbourhood of the Parsi tower of silence. There he would sometimes sit for hours alone. He was a lover of beauty and took great pleasure in music and poetry. At school

he was methodical and punctual and a rapid learner. He was alert and brisk to an unusual degree, a quick walker, and a fast runner. He delighted in sports, excelling in cricket and hockey.

Meher received the ordinary education of a boy of his class. When he was five years old he was taken to the Dastur Girls' School, where he learned to read and write the Gujarati language and the rudiments of arithmetic. At the age of nine he was sent to the Camp Government English School, where he remained five years. Then he went to St. Vincent's High School, considered the best school in Poona. From that school he matriculated in 1911 at the age of seventeen.

The greatest educational institution in the Deccan at the time was the Deccan College, situated midway between Poona and Kirkee. It was one of the few colleges in India which before the War permitted much freedom to students. Meher entered the college in 1911. His main interests were in literature, especially poetry, and he read avidly Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, and many other poets, English, Indian, and Persian. He had the faculty of remembering almost everything he read. He had also the ordinary tastes of a boy and read the usual "bloods"; at the age of fifteen he wrote a story for his favourite blood, *The Union Jack*, which was accepted and printed. His mind was not attracted to science, nor to mathematics, nor to history. The poet to whom he gave his heart was Khwaja Shams al-Din Mahommed, who wrote under the name of Hafiz, one of the greatest lyric poets of Persia. Meher was not spiritually advanced when he read Hafiz, but he was much enraptured by him. Under that influence Meher wrote many poems himself in Gujarati, Urdu, Hindustani, and Persian, which were published under the *nom de plume* of "Homa" in *Sanj Vartman*, one of the most popular vernacular newspapers of Bombay. He also wrote

poems in English. He delighted in music and loved to sing. He was also an eager conversationalist.

It seems that as a youth Meher had the sense of leadership. In school as well as in college he was leader of his classmates. He was not a self-constituted leader, but was looked upon naturally as a leader wherever he was. In quarrels Meher was called upon to settle the dispute, and other boys came to him for advice as a matter of course. Soon after he became a student at Deccan College he formed a club outside the college, which he named "The Cosmopolitan Club."

Anybody, no matter to what community he belonged, could become a member. Amongst its rules were those forbidding its members to gamble, use bad language, or to quarrel. The club did not have a long life, but it indicated Meher's interest in bringing people together, uniting them without a sense of class or race.

FIRST SPIRITUAL MASTER

It cannot be said that Meher, while at college, had shown any particular aptitude or entertained any ambition. He was a high-spirited, eager, and friendly youth; he passed his examinations with credit. But his studies were interrupted and the course of his life was changed. One morning in the month of May 1913, when Meher was riding on a bicycle along the Malcom Tank Road, in Poona, he looked up and saw an old woman sitting under a neem tree. His eyes met hers, and she beckoned to him. He knew who the woman was, but had had no thought of meeting her. He left his bicycle and went over to her; she arose and embraced him. From that moment Meher felt the call to the spiritual life. Not a word was said. He remained sitting with her for a

quarter of an hour, and then left her. That was the first meeting between Meher and Hazrat Babajan.

This remarkable woman was said to be at that time one hundred and twenty-two years old. Her actual date of birth is not known, but it is supposed to have been about 1790, in that land of mountains, deserts, and stony plains, Baluchistan, to the west of India. She was a Mahommedan, and is said to have devoted herself to prayer and meditation and the realization of God from girlhood. Little or nothing is known about the greater part of her life. It is said that her parents would have forced her to marry, but she ran away on her wedding-day. After years in search of God she found a Master, who many years afterwards made her perfect. Then she lived in the Punjab for a long period. It is certain that she was seen in Bombay in 1900, where she stayed for some years, her favourite place of resort being the locality near Pydhowni. She used to pay visits to the well-known saints, Hazrat Maulana Saheb of Bandra and Hazrat Baba Abdurrehman of Dongri, both of whom, it is said, she addressed as "My children." In 1903 she went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where she honoured the religious customs of the Moslems, and was, it is said, in a normal conscious state. The story is told of her, when on the journey to Mecca, that the steamer in which she was travelling met with a storm. All the passengers were in terror except Babajan. She called to a fellow-passenger named Nuru Pankhawala, bade him suspend his handkerchief from his neck in such a manner as to form a receptable, and to go to each passenger to beg a pice from him or her. Then she called to the Mahommedans to pray to God that the ship should be saved. Then the storm abated and there was calm.

It is not known when she returned to India; but for

twenty-four years before her death, which took place in September 1931, she stayed in Poona, having a seat, which was also her bed, under the neem tree in the Malcom Tank Road. Up to her last ten years there was no canopy over the seat, and she was exposed to all weathers, including even the severe monsoon storms, except for the protection of the tree. Ten years before she died, however, Babajan one bright day predicted that a great storm with torrents of rain would overtake the city. The storm came suddenly, and people were taken by surprise in the streets; trees were uprooted and houses blown down. Babajan remained under her tree. Her devotees, who numbered hundreds in Poona itself, then decided that a shelter should be provided for her, and with great difficulty they got permission to erect a small building, about eight feet in breadth and twenty-five feet in length, which included the tree. Half the walls consisted of masonry and the other half of trellis, the roof being galvanized sheeting.

The Cantonment Board, until it was Indianized, did not welcome Babajan's presence, for the members feared that the traffic would be interfered with by her devotees, who sometimes gathered in large numbers. But so great was her determination to stay where she was that she could not be dislodged. Pilgrims by the thousand used to visit her just to kiss her hands or merely to look at her. She was recognized as a Sadguru, a God-conscious being. She was heard to say that she was God, that she was the source of everything, and that everything was created by her. Babajan was sometimes attacked for making such statements, and there is a story of her being buried alive by some fanatical Baluchis who considered her to be blasphemous; but she came out of her grave and left Rawalpindi, where this event is said to have occurred.

For many years Babajan was in a super-conscious state.

For twenty years before her death she did not take a bath, but her skin was said to have been clean and healthy as if she had bathed daily. Those who knew her declare that her personality was magnetic to a remarkable degree. Age had furrowed deep wrinkles in her face, and her hair was completely white, but she had full powers of sight and hearing, and, though she spent most of her days lying on her bed, she was as active and could walk as quickly as a young girl. She had a liking for putting on rings of various metals. On account of an ill-fitting ring she lost a finger from her left hand; even when the finger became septic she would not have the ring removed, and sacrificed her finger. She laid down her body, as the Indians say, in 1931.

A Hindu proverb says that when the disciple is ready the Master must come. Thus Meher's meeting with Babajan that day in 1913 was no accident. He came when she beckoned him, and he was thrilled by the embrace of the old woman. He was, he said, drawn to her as steel to a magnet. He loved her as the spiritual desire of his heart. After that first meeting he visited her every night. They seldom spoke. Their meetings were silent and spiritual.

One night in January 1914, when he made his usual visit, she was in a mood to talk. He kissed her hands and stood humbly before her. She pointed her little finger at him, and declared that "This child of mine will after some years create a great sensation in the world and do immense good to humanity." Meher stood there for a few moments, and then went home. It was nearly eleven o'clock. He went at once to bed. Before ten minutes had passed he began to experience extraordinary thrills. He felt as if he were receiving electric shocks and as if his nerves were mere vibrations. He felt great joy mingled with pain, and presently he became

alarmed. But his alarm was short-lived, for he became unconscious.

The first person to discover Meher in this condition was his mother. She found him lying with wide-open, vacant eyes. She called to him, and he sat up. He could not speak. Thinking he was seriously ill, she made him lie down again. For three days he lay in this condition. His eyes were open, but he saw nothing. On the fourth day Meher began to move about and was slightly conscious of his body. So he remained for nearly nine months. He had no knowledge of his own actions, and what he did was in response to no prompting of his mind. He was totally unconscious of the world. If he seated himself, he would not get up until the lapse of several hours. If he walked, he would continue walking for a number of hours. One day he is said to have left his home in the hot sun during the afternoon and to have walked for fifteen miles without stopping, in the course of which he went from his home to the Bund Garden and back three times. Once he went to Kondwa, behind the Parsi tower of silence at Poona, and there lay down for three days. He had no food. He did not sleep. His parents thought his mind to be unhinged. He was given food, but he gave it to the dogs, or, intending to give it away to beggars, put it in his drawers, where it went rotten and stank.

He was placed under medical treatment, given sleeping-draughts and morphia injections; but nothing had any effect. He was sent to Bombay to see if a change of environment would make any difference; but he remained the same. He stayed with his brother Jamshedji in Bombay for two months, and used to go to Chaupati in the mornings, sitting there for hours watching the waves, and in the afternoons he would go to the Victoria Gardens, sitting always on one particular bench. Then he returned to Poona, spending most of his time in the garret of his father's house.

In November 1914 he regained a little consciousness and behaved, it was said, "as an automaton possessing intuition." His eyes ceased to be vacant and life returned to them. He began to take food regularly, though in small amounts. He mixed little with the members of his family and seldom went out for walks. A month after this partial return of consciousness his friend Khodadad Shirzad Irani brought to him a poor young man of Persian parentage named Behramji Ferdoonji Irani, who immediately became attached to him, and afterwards was one of his most intimate disciples. Meher offered to teach Behramji Persian, which was the first sign of his having regained consciousness. His parents were delighted and urged him to get regular work with the object of aiding his recovery, and when he refused they got additional pupils for him, but he declined to accept them. But he taught Behramji, who made rapid progress, though Meher himself was said to possess no more than a tenth of his normal consciousness. He taught automatically, not as a conscious teacher.

SECOND SPIRITUAL MASTER

At last there came a further development. During April 1915 Meher had an impulse to lead an itinerant life. At first he wandered only in the suburbs of Poona; but as the impulse grew upon him he decided to go further afield. So one day he informed Behramji that he would shortly go to a distant place, and there lead the life of a monk under the guidance of a Sadguru. He told Behramji that after settling there he would invite him to join him, and that he (Behramji) would do well to accept the invitation. On the same day he left Poona by train; but to everybody's surprise returned the next day. He had intended to go to Raichur, but at Kedgaon, thirty-four miles from Poona, he decided to get out. About

seven miles away from Kedgaon station there lives Sadguru Narayan Maharaj, whom Meher had the impulse to meet. Meher therefore called upon him, and after a brief stay returned to his home at Poona.

Sadguru Narayan Maharaj lives in a large, well-furnished bungalow. He wears costly clothes and adorns his person with jewels. He is a strict vegetarian and eats very little. He plays the rôle of a great Bhakta, and offers prayers and performs ceremonies regularly. His pilgrims number thousands, and he has built a large inn to accommodate them. He has also built a beautiful temple in honour of the Hindu God Datta, into which he goes twice a day. Though his mode of living is that of a rich man, he is regarded as "God-realized." He is said to have become an itinerant monk as a child and to have become spiritually perfect at the age of twenty-five.

After a fortnight in Poona, Meher, accompanied by Behramji, left again and went to Bombay, where he remained for a few days. The only person he saw in Bombay was Tipoo Baba, who stayed at the time near a mosque at Bhendi Bazaar, which is one of the most crowded localities of the city. Tipoo Baba, a disciple of Hazrat Abdurrehman, is a saint, but not a perfect one. From Bombay, Meher went to Aurangabad. At that time Benemyan Baba was staying in that city. He was a Mujzub, that is a God-realized man who remains unconscious of the gross world; he was a disciple of Sai Baba of Sherdi.

After visiting Benemyan Baba, Meher went with Behramji to Nagpur, where both of them paid a visit to Tajuddin Baba, about whom Babajan used to say, "Taj is Kalifa" (meaning Taj is head of the Caliphs). Tajuddin Baba was a

great Mahommedan Hazrat. He was once a soldier in the service of the British Government when he became God-realized. Then he gave up the military calling and went to Nagpur. As soon as it was known that Tajuddin had become spiritually perfect, persons of all castes and creeds called upon him with a view to getting his blessing. There seemed to be no limit to the number of his visitors. People troubled him by asking him silly questions and by entreating him to fulfil their desires. He was indeed much annoyed with them, and the annoyance became so unbearable that he desired to get away from all visitors. He carried out this resolution in the following manner. One evening he went naked to a tennis court where Europeans were playing, and began to behave exactly like a madman. As a consequence he was sent to a lunatic asylum, where he lived for seventeen years. Even there hundreds of people called upon him with a view to receiving his blessing. In the last year of his life in the lunatic asylum the titular Chief of Kampti, near Nagpur, paid him a visit. The Chief was well aware of the fact that Tajuddin Baba was a Sadguru and as sane as himself. He persuaded the saint to leave the asylum and stay as his guest at his palace in Nagpur, where he would not be troubled by worldly people. The Hazrat accepted the invitation, and passed the remainder of his life, when already well stricken in age, in the Chief's palace. He is reputed to have performed a number of miracles, one of which was to make a dead man alive. He breathed his last in 1924. At his funeral no less than thirty thousand people were said to have been present.

From Nagpur Meher returned to Poona. After some weeks he again left in company with the same friend to call upon Hazrat Sai Baba, of Sherdi, of whom something should be said.

When and where Sai Baba was born, who were his parents, how he passed his boyhood days, are not known. His career can be traced from his arrival at Sherdi, which is a village at a distance of ten miles from the Kopargaon railway station, in the district of Ahmednagar in the Deccan. About sixty years ago he first went to this village, and in the beginning led the life of an itinerant monk. He begged not only for food but also for oil, for in the mosque of the village he kept a lamp burning all night. One day those who generally used to give him oil resolved not to give him any. So in the presence of several people he filled the lamp with water, and to their astonishment it began to burn when he lighted it, and it burned all night! This miracle, which I repeat as told me, naturally convinced the people that he was not an ordinary fakir but a great saint. Thenceforth the whole village were his devotees, and he began to live in the mosque itself. When calm he was as gentle as a lamb, but when roused up he was liable to be exceedingly fierce. As the years rolled by the number of his devotees went on increasing. From his rich visitors he asked for money, and there and then gave it away to the poor standing near. Thousands of his devotees were Hindus, and, though he was a Mahommedan, they performed the ceremony of arti[1] in his honour. His greatest and most famous disciple was no other than Upasni Maharaj, who is a Hindu. It was in 1918 that he finally entered Samadhi, or, as we say, died. A stone slab in the mosque used to serve him as a pillow. One day in that year it was accidentally broken to pieces. Sai Baba, seeing the pieces, said that the breaking of the slab meant that it was to be the last day of his life: and it proved to be so.

[1] "Arti" is an act of devotion in which the devotees stand facing the Master; one of them holds a metal tray on which there are flowers, ember sticks, and camphor which is ignited; the tray is waved before the Master, while the devotees chant a hymn.

After beholding the white head of Sai Baba, Meher, with Behramji, turned his footsteps to the residence of Sadguru Upasni Maharaj, who, as will be seen later, was destined to bring him to full consciousness after six long years. It was then the last month of the year 1915.

Kashinath Govindrao Upasni, now well known as Sadguru Upasni Maharaj, was born on May 15, 1870, at Satana in the district of Nasik. His childhood was happy, but occasionally he was found sunk in a state of depression. When he became seven years old it was decided by his guardians to send him to school. But the boy hated the idea of school: it was to him like going to a prison, and to study was equivalent to being heavily punished. He disliked studies, not because he wished to play, but because he was religious-minded. Nothing gave him so much joy as the offering of prayers, participation in the performance of ceremonies, and the hearing of sermons. From his early childhood the very word religion cast a spell upon him. Indications of his future were seen in his boyhood. In courtesy and modesty, in generosity and devoutness, the boy was said to be father to the man. When scarcely twelve years of age he resolved to relinquish the shelter of his parents' home and to lead the itinerant life of a monk. From Dhulia he went on foot to Nasik, where he chanced upon an old friend of his grandfather. The aged man, on hearing the boy's story, requested him to stay with him. The boy accepted the offer, but hated to be a burden to his host. Though he lodged in the old man's house, he did not accept food from him. When hungry he would go out and beg for food. His father, as soon as he came to know that his son was in Nasik, thought of a plan to call him back. He sent a telegram to say that the boy's mother was on her death-bed and was pining to see him. The telegram made the boy sorrow-stricken, and

he returned to Dhulia. But there he found his mother in health and strength! He entered into his parents' feelings and agreed to their request to stay with them, but he remained heavy-hearted.

After some time his parents married him to a girl named Durgabai. Within a couple of years of her marriage Durgabai died. When he was sixteen he married for the second time, but the marriage failed to produce any effect upon his temperament. It did not remove his melancholy. He was conscious of the fact that his parents had forced him into a course of life which was entirely opposed to his convictions. His parents grieved for him, but they had not the heart to agree to his daily request to allow him to lead the life of total renunciation. However, when the conviction that he would grieve himself to death grew upon them they saw the advisability of complying with his wishes. After obtaining their blessings Kashinath bade good-bye to them and went to Poona, where he resumed the life of a sannyasin. He practised great austerities. When he was about twenty years old he shut himself up for one year in a cave on the top of a mountain near Nasik. When he came out of it he was reduced to a skeleton.

After leaving the cave he stayed three months in a village inhabited by poor people, who fed him and to whom he tried to be useful. Then he returned on foot to Dhulia. Within three years of his reunion with his family he lost first his father, then his grandfather, and lastly his wife. Six months after the death of his second wife his mother and uncle got him married for the third time; then he went with his wife to Poona, where he lived at the house of his brother, Balkrishna, who was then one of the professors at the Poona Training College. From Poona he repaired by himself to Sangli, which is situated not far from Kolhapur. In Sangli there is a temple, known

as Shri Dattaguru temple, which borders on the River Krishna. In this temple Kashinath stayed, leading the life of a devout monk for two and a half years. His food during this period was mainly the leaves of certain trees; he only occasionally partook of grains and fruits. Soon after this period he set out for Poona, but on the way he was captured by a band of gipsies on a pretext which resembled that under which the wolf in the fable ate up the lamb. The gipsies flatly refused to release him unless he first provided them with a large sum of money. As he had not a pice on his person, they forced him to work for them, but in two days he got back his freedom. He then went to Poona, whence with his wife he went to Satana, where he began to practise as an Atha Veda doctor. He soon shone out as a practitioner and became well known. As he was fired with the zeal to establish a hospital in a well-populated city, he went to Amraoti, which is in the Central Provinces not far from Nagpur. Immediately after settling in it he founded a nursing-home, which he designated Rama Ashram. Kashinath was an ideal doctor. He gave free treatment to the poor, and was far more bent on restoring health than upon making money. No wonder that within a short time he became popular with the people of Amraoti! But Kashinath was not born for such a life, and it began to bore him, though it was bringing him both fame and riches. Boredom at last caused him so much disgust that he gave up medicine and repaired to Ujjain. He was then about thirty-five years old. With his wife he led a quiet and holy life in Ujjain for a couple of years, passing the greater part of the day in prayer and meditation. From Ujjain the husband and wife went to Amraoti, whence after staying for a few days they repaired to Nagpur, where Narayan Maharaj was then staying on a flying visit.

Some time after this he went to Rahuri, which is in the

district of Ahmednagar, and stayed there for a few days as a guest of Kulkarni Maharaj, who was a yogi. The latter strongly requested him to pay a visit to the Hazrat Sai Baba, but Kashinath declined to do so for the reason that Sai Baba was a Mahommedan. "Why should I go to a Mahommedan," said he to his host, "and pay him devotion? Even if I am likely to be benefited at his hands, I must not call upon him." After taking leave of his host he went to the jungle not far from Rahuri. Not minding the thorns, he made the jungle his abode. He was at this time in the depths of depression and imbued with the belief that he was soon to die. After several days he left the jungle and went to the village of Jejuri. From Jejuri he repaired to Morgaon, and from Morgaon to Supa, where he resided in a temple for some days. The people of Supa were much drawn to him and paid him devotion as a saint, though he told them repeatedly that he was but an ordinary itinerant monk. Some of his devotees one day took him to the Shankar temple, which had a small underground cell. Seeing it, he asked them whether they would like to go down into it, but all of them refused to do so as it was in darkness. Though they requested him not to descend into it, Kashinath went down, and to the surprise of all who were watching him no sooner did he enter it than it was illuminated by a bright light. Where that light came from neither he nor anybody else could understand. That is how the story goes.

From Supa Kashinath went to Kedgaon to call upon Narayan Maharaj. But he had gone to Bombay. So Kashinath also went to Bombay. There he expressed his desire to talk with Narayan Maharaj privately. The latter replied, "You should go presently from here, but come back in the evening." When he called upon the Sadguru in the evening, Narayan, as soon as his eyes fell upon him, said: "Do not be afraid. Everything will be all right in a few days." After uttering

these words Narayan gave Kashinath something to eat, told him to masticate it thoroughly, and then observed: "To-day you have been so much painted as till now nobody was ever painted." It was beyond the comprehension of Kashinath to grasp the significance of these words, and he was so much bewildered that the Sadguru said to him, "Never mind if you do not understand me! The time will come, and it is approaching fast, when you will understand everything." He added: "For the present be contented with believing that you have been thoroughly painted. I cannot explain what I mean." On the following day Kashinath went to the Sadguru and asked his permission to leave Bombay. The Sadguru replied: "You may go out of Bombay whenever you like. I will meet you within a few days, and in such a way that I will permanently stay with you." These words were mysterious, and Kashinath wondered what the Sadguru meant. After leaving Bombay, Kashinath went to Rahta in the Ahmednagar district.

From Rahta he went to Sherdi to see the Hazrat Sai Baba, his prejudice against him having melted away. After a short time he asked Sai Baba's permission to go. "What!" said the Sadguru, "do you want to go away so soon? No, no, you shall not go so soon. Go and stay for a few days in that yard." This silenced Kashinath, but he made a wry face, as he did not like to stay there. Sai Baba read his face, and said: "All right, all right, you may go, but return to me within nine days." "If it is possible for me," said Kashinath, "to return here within nine days, I certainly will. But I do not give you any promise." Kashinath then went to the Chitali railway station, which is only thirteen miles from Sherdi. It so came to pass that by a combination of circumstances, in spite of himself, he was forced to return to the Sadguru on the eighth day. When he presented himself Sai Baba asked

him, "How many days have elapsed since you left the village?" "To-day is the eighth day, sir," was the reply. "Now then," observed Sai Baba, "did I not tell you that you would return within nine days? Now go and make the yard your abode." Kashinath carried out this command. In a few days Sai Baba, we are told, made Kashinath, who was then about forty-two years old, God-realized, and then brought him down from the divine plane to restore a little normal consciousness.

Thus Kashinath Govindrao Upasni became perfect, and was called Upasni Maharaj. Afterwards Sai Baba told him to dwell in the Khandoba temple, which was not far from the abode of the Sadguru. In this temple Upasni Maharaj lived for four years. As he was possessed only of a little earthly consciousness, he sometimes acted as a madman. But all who understood his condition respected him as much as they respected his master, Sai Baba.

After four years at the Khandoba temple Sai Baba brought him to the consciousness of the earthly world. Thus, when he was forty-seven years old, Upasni Maharaj became a Sadguru, or Master.

Soon after becoming a Sadguru, Upasni Maharaj left Sherdi and went to Nagpur, where he stayed for a few weeks. From Nagpur he went to Kharagpur, a village in the Monghyr district of Bengal. At Kharagpur he stayed for about a year. Scarcely a week elapsed after his arrival when his saintliness revealed itself and drew towards him persons of all castes and creeds. His Hindu devotees, even then, numbered thousands: Mahommedans by hundreds, and Christians by scores. His luminous face enthralled, as it still enthralls, thousands of men, women, and children. Sometimes he stayed with Brahmins, but often with Bhangis. Bhangis are sweepers who clean the streets and remove the refuse of the houses—they are considered to be untouchables by the Brahmins; but even

when Upasni Maharaj was in the locality inhabited by Bhangis, Brahmins called upon him and performed ceremonies before him without any reserve or scruple. Sometimes to test the faith of his Brahmin visitors he would say: "You belong to the highest caste. Are you not ashamed to approach me when I am staying with these untouchables?" And his visitors would reply: "Why should we be ashamed to come near you? Are you not Paramatman? To whatever place you go it becomes holy. Wherever you go we shall follow."

Clad in beggar's rags he was often found helping workmen in public streets. Sometimes he was with cobblers mending shoes, or with poor women grinding corn, or cleaning vessels, or breaking stones. He swept the streets of the slums and the hovels of the poor.

From Kharagpur he went to Nagpur, and from Nagpur to the district of Ahmednagar. For the last nineteen years he has stayed in Sakori, which is a village about nine miles from the Chitali railway station. His home is small, though the temple he has built near it is large and splendid. The temple is open not only to the Hindus of low as well as high caste, but also to non-Hindus. He generally wears nothing save a loin-cloth, and his food is as simple as his clothing.

The accusation is made against Upasni Maharaj that he sometimes not only vituperates, but also severely beats some of his followers. The accusation is not groundless. The charge can also be levelled against other Sadgurus. That a God-realized person should abuse and beat others may seem odd; but the explanation is that when he beats or abuses anyone he is doing such a one much good. More will be said of this later.

When Upasni Maharaj saw Meher for the first time he flung a stone at him. This was to help to bring Meher down

still further into gross consciousness, to awaken him to the things of this world. The stone hit Meher's head, but he was not surprised and understood the reason of what was done. Meher stayed with Upasni for two days, and then returned to Poona. From that day onwards Meher recommenced to visit Babajan, sitting with her every night for about an hour. He also at that time took food twice daily.

RETURN TO NORMALITY

All this time the members of Meher's family considered that he was weak in the head and did not regard him as being in a high spiritual state. Almost every day he would go to the Parsi tower of silence and sit there for hours, or go to the jungle beyond, where he would sit knocking his forehead against the stones. His head was bruised, but Meher wrapped a handkerchief about his head to hide the bruises so that his family were not aware of what was happening. Meher has since explained that the physical pain caused by knocking his head relieved the spiritual agony in which he was at that time. He no longer felt an impulse to travel, but twice each month would go to Sakori to visit Upasni Maharaj. He also wrote regularly to the Sadguru, and the latter wrote to Meher. None of these letters has been preserved, but they are said to have been unintelligible to other readers.

As Meher gradually became normal his mother more and more pressed upon him the desirability of adopting a profession or engaging in some business. He was then twenty-two years of age. Meher tried to do as his mother wished, and on three occasions found employment, but he could remain at no work for long. He was compelled to play the rôle of a spiritual eccentric.

In 1916 Meher was appointed manager of the Kan (Kavasji)

Khatau theatrical company, and in that capacity went to Lahore. At that time he wrote a letter to his friend Behramji, in which he said: "I am compelled to do even what I do not like, compelled to eat what I dislike, forced to put on clothes for which I have no liking." While still holding this appointment he used to visit solitary places and continued to beat his head against stone walls. But after two months the proprietor of the company died and it was disbanded, and Meher returned to Poona. He then took charge of his father's teashop at Ashurkhana in the Poona cantonment, for the old man was sick and had to go to Bombay. Meher was not a successful shopkeeper. He could not keep his mind on the business, and was cheated by the customers. On his father's return from Bombay, he (the father) applied for a licence to deal in toddy, and opened a shop in the locality of Kasba Peth in the city. Meher looked after this shop for two hours every day; but the customers took pleasure in cheating him. In spite of this, however, Meher made up his mind to open a toddy shop of his own in partnership with his friend Behramji, who secured a licence for Meher's father's shop in Kasba Peth, and Meher and Behramji became partners. Meher worked in the shop from six in the morning until twelve o'clock, washing the bottles, sweeping the floor, and serving customers. The toddy is the sap of the palm tree, a cheap drink, and not of strong alcoholic content. Meher, however, used to urge his customers, who were largely the poor riff-raff of the city, to drink moderately, and often urged them to abstain altogether. After a year of this work Meher became merely a sleeping partner, and in the troublous times of the Non-co-operation Movement the toddy shops were picketed as well as liquor shops, and Meher prevailed upon Behramji to dissolve their partnership and to close the shop.

During this time Meher used to play the game of atya-patya

(the game of the Rishis), gilla-danda (Indian cricket, played with a thick stick for the bat and a thin stick instead of a ball), and cricket, and used to entertain his friends in the evening. He hired a small room near the shop, and hung the walls with pictures of saints and prophets, including Babajan and Upasni Maharaj. Ceremonies were performed every evening and twice a week between four and five o'clock in the morning.

One day in 1920 Meher shut himself up in an attic belonging to Behramji in the locality of Kamatipura. He had with him a bucket of refuse which he got from a sweeper of the public roads. He remained in the attic for thirty-six hours. When he came out he was in a pitiable condition. From head to foot he was smeared with dirt, and was thoroughly exhausted. Behramji took it upon himself to make him clean. The stage in spiritual development in which Meher then was impelled him to do the most lowly work, hence the toddy shop, and to abject himself continually. We are reminded of the life of Saint Francis. Meher had visions and spiritual experiences. On one occasion he realized that the universe was created for him, and he was alone in it. At another time, sitting near a pond at Sakori, he felt that the thoughts of others were entering his mind; he was so much disturbed that he sought relief by immersing his head in the pond.

HE BECOMES A MASTER

By the beginning of 1921 Meher was three-quarters normal; he could do ordinary acts, speak in a normal way, and understand what was said to him. In the month of July he went to Sakori, and lived there for six months with Upasni Maharaj. During that period he did not take a bath, nor did he lie down to rest, but walked continuously or sat upright;

he took food, at first, only once in two or three days. During the last month, however, for some reason he ate a great deal, taking four meals a day. He was looked after by the spiritual mother of Upasni Maharaj, who was then about fifty years old: she regarded it as her mission to serve Meher and put herself at his beck and call. Meher and Upasni Maharaj used to spend a number of hours together at night and every day, when none was allowed to approach them. Usually they sat silent. Sometimes Meher would sing.

At the end of December 1921 Meher was restored to full normal consciousness. Upasni Maharaj said to his disciples: "I have given my charge[1] to Merwan. He is the holder of my key." Some time after, in the presence of a number of people, the Sadguru said, "This boy will move the world. Humanity at large will be benefited at his hands." A few days later Upasni Maharaj sent for Gustadji Hansotia, one of his leading disciples, and said, "I have made Merwan perfect. He is the latest Sadguru of this age. Now you have to leave me and stick to him." To Behramji he said, "Your friend is God-realized; carry out every command and every desire of his." So Meher became a Sadguru at the age of twenty-seven, and came to be recognized as Meher Baba, meaning the Master.

What is a Sadguru? According to Hindu philosophy he is one who, while living on the earth, has come into the full consciousness of God. He has passed through all the planes of consciousness and lives on earth and in heaven at once. Eastern teaching says that the planes of human consciousness are seven:

1. The Plane of Intellect on which material knowledge is gained.
2. The Plane of Intuition on which imagination works.

[1] On this subject of "chargeman," Baba has commented, see the following pages and also the section in Part III.

3. The Plane of Lower Inspiration on which the spiritual world is perceived.
4. The Plane of Insight on which reality and actuality are distinguished.
5. The Plane of Higher Inspiration on which the soul enters into reality.
6. The Plane of Illumination on which the unity of all things is perceived.
7. The Plane of Perfection on which the soul is free.

It is necessary to pass through one plane before entering upon the next higher plane. The great mass of people do no more than barely emerge from the stage of animal consciousness or instinct into that of the consciousness of intellect or reason, and how little they possess the consciousness of reason we well know. But even that consciousness brings bliss. After mastery of reason comes intuition, which is the plane on which the poets write, and after that comes inspiration, where are created the leaders of men. Those in the plane of insight can read the minds of other men and see distant things as near: they are also in the realm of miracles, which is a dangerous stage of the soul, where selfishness may easily become uppermost. The next plane is that of knowledge of God and the laws of God, and he who passes into it has no desire to do miracles or to serve himself. On the sixth plane God is seen as well as known, and on the seventh plane union with God is achieved. It is said that it is possible to pass through the first three planes without a master, but for the last four the help of a master is needed.[1]

[1] The giving of the experience on the seventh plane by a Master to a disciple belonging to another religion indicates the non-existence of barriers of religion, caste, or race in spiritual realms; among the examples already given here are Sai Baba (Mohammedan) to Upasni Maharaj (Hindu), Babajan (Mohammedan) to Meher Baba (Zoroastrian), and Upasni Maharaj (Hindu) to Meher Baba (Zoroastrian).

After Meher Baba became a Sadguru or Master he wrote to his disciple, Sadashiv Patel of Poona, desiring him to take on lease a small plot of ground there, if possible close by the temple of Chatarsingni and to build a small hut on it. He intimated that he intended to live in that hut, and no longer in the house of his parents. At the beginning of 1922 Meher Baba left Sakori for Bombay, where he stayed at the house of the late Munshi Saikh Abdurrahim. In the house he took a bath for the first time for six months; he stayed there for ten days. Afterwards he went to the hut built for him in Poona, on the Ferguson College Road, where he continued to live. The size of the hut was ten feet by six feet. Meher Baba spent his time daily in the following way. Early in the morning he took breakfast, brought to him by one of his disciples. At nine he would be visited by Hindu worshippers of the Bhoi caste, who follow the trade of fishing. These devotees would stay for about an hour chanting Hindu religious songs and playing Hindu musical instruments. At about half-past ten Meher Baba left his hut and went to his mother's house for dinner, and after a rest he would return to the hut for the remainder of the day. In the afternoon he would glance at the newspapers, and in the evening a number of his friends would come to him; they would entertain him with music or play Indian games, and afterwards Meher Baba would present them with sweets in the Indian custom, and then discourse to them on spiritual themes. At nine o'clock he would take supper, brought by another of his disciples, and from that hour till dawn no one was permitted to approach him except his devotee, Behli J. Irani, whose duty it was to stay with him all night. No one was allowed even to loiter outside the hut.

Many stories are told of strange occurrences at this time. It is said that one evening four stout Irani youths came into

the hut to confuse Meher Baba with questions and to beat him as a hypocrite. But when they saw him not one of them could open his mouth or do anything but look shamefaced. Baba reproached them with chicken-heartedness; they still could not say a word, but fell down at his feet and then went away.

One evening Jamshed R. Irani, a maternal uncle of Behramji, thought he would like to know what happened in the hut from nine o'clock at night until dawn. So with a few friends he went to see for himself. He knew where the hut was, for he visited Baba almost daily; but when Jamshed and his friends got on the Ferguson College Road they could find no trace of the hut. They searched in vain, and had to return home. At seven o'clock Jamshed brought an offering of fruit and flowers to Baba, and confessed the wrong he had done. Baba showed no displeasure, but felt sad and said Jamshed would have to suffer: in two days his youngest child died.

When Baba retired at night it was the duty of Behli to keep watch. He was not permitted to go to sleep. One night, however, he did sleep for a short time, and on awakening found to his horror that Baba's bed was vacant. Behli was about to open the door of the hut, when weird figures appeared; for he had been forbidden not to open the door at night whatever happened. Horrified, he sat down and wept, and went to sleep again. On awakening he found Baba in bed.

Another story is told of an occasion when Behli was relieved by another disciple, Arjun Supekar. Arjun was instructed to sit outside the hut and not to permit anyone to approach it. At about one o'clock at night Baba called to him, "Arjun, are you wide awake?" Arjun said that he was. "Whatever may happen, don't be frightened," warned Baba. Then before very long Arjun was startled by seeing two tall men, clothed in white robes, coming towards him. He could

hardly speak, but managed to call out, "Who are you?" Baba replied from the hut, saying "What's the matter, Arjun?" The figures vanished on the instant, and Baba himself appeared. Arjun never recovered from this fright, it is said.

During the first three months Baba used to go every Thursday evening to Kasba Peth, where he would receive the devotion of his followers. Every Sunday he went on an excursion. One Sunday, in the midst of merrymaking, Baba, to the great surprise of everybody, ordered one of his disciples who had come with a bicycle to break it into pieces and throw them into the well, which was a stone's throw from the place where they were. Nobody could understand why this was done, and Baba gave no explanation. When the party returned they found that Behli had accidentally fallen into the well near Baba's hut, and had miraculously escaped from being drowned. Baba said when he was asked about the matter, "Instead of allowing Behli to be drowned, I sank the cycle in the well. It was a gross exchange."

Baba allowed the observance of not only Parsi but also of Hindu and Mahommedan holidays, for his growing number of disciples included all castes and creeds. One of the chief woman disciples of Meher Baba is Gulmai Kaikhushru Irani, wife of Khan Bahadur Kaikhushru Sarosh Irani, a wealthy merchant of the district of Ahmednagar. Mrs. Gulmai was born in July 1882 at Parel, Bombay, of poor parents. She is said always to have been spiritually minded. In August 1919 she became a devotee of Upasni Maharaj, and of Meher Baba in March 1922. She has four children, and her two sons, Rustam and Adi, are among Meher Baba's closest disciples.

THE FIRST ASHRAM

In May 1922 Baba made an important journey on foot, with forty-five followers, from Poona to Bombay. Of the followers

twelve were Mahommedans, eleven Zoroastrians, and the remainder Hindus. The members of the party visited Hazrat Babajan at midnight one after another before they started. Some of the party were aged, and could not continue the journey by road but were permitted to go by train, and in fact the remainder of the party completed the last few miles by motor lorry.

On arrival in Bombay, Meher Baba took a large bungalow on the Main Road, Dadar. This bungalow was named by Baba Manzil-e-Meem (meaning the House of the Master), and was leased for one year; there Meher Baba formed his first Ashram. It was a large house of fifteen rooms, and was never furnished, for on Baba's strict instructions any article of furniture was forbidden. The rules made by Baba to be observed by those who were with him were as follows:

1. Everyone should carefully follow the spiritual instruction given by the Master.
2. Everyone should maintain, or break off, as ordered by the Master, any special connection with anybody.
3. Everyone should totally abstain from all intoxicants and from sexual intercourse.
4. None should partake of fish, meat, or eggs under any circumstances.
5. All are bound to be in the Manzil from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.
6. There should not be any lapse on the part of anyone in the performance of his duty.
7. Under no circumstances, except when ordered, should any member of the party leave the Master, even if the whole world turns against him.

Meher Baba gave this warning: "If any one of these written orders is intentionally broken, I shall lock myself in my room, and during my self-imposed solitary confinement, which may last for a number of days, I shall not take any food."

Another order was that none should read or write anything without Baba's permission, whether in the Manzil or outside. If a disciple happened to read a signboard while passing through a street, he was considered to have broken this order. If a disciple wished to write a letter to anyone, he had to obtain Baba's permission, and the letter had to be shown to Baba when written. Should a disciple receive a letter, he had to take it first to Baba, who seldom gave permission for the letter to be read until he had first read it.

All orders had to be carried out promptly. If Baba called when a disciple was shaving, he had to stop and go as he was, and he had to go even if he were taking a bath. Some orders appeared to have no meaning or to be extraordinary. For example, three disciples were told that whenever they were free from work they were to sit close by him, A on Baba's right hand, B on his left, and C opposite him. Whatever the place or circumstances, even if travelling by train, they were required to carry out this order.

Even though an order seemed to make the disciple ridiculous, it had to be obeyed without question. One of Baba's orders was that no disciple should talk with anyone who was not of the party living in the Manzil. The following further rules were made after the party was established in the Manzil:

1. The floor of every room should be scrubbed by its occupants at least once daily.
2. As far as possible, everyone should enter the hall or the first floor and the dining-room in bare feet.
3. Without putting on wooden sandals, none should go into any water-closet.
4. None should enter any room other than his own without the permission of one of its occupants.
5. Whenever the bell is tolled, all must assemble in the dining-room.

6. No one should exchange food or clothes with another.
7. Everybody should do full justice to his meals.
8. At the end of meals, everybody should remove his plates.
9. All should eat and drink in the posture of seating.
10. When anybody gets ill, he must as early as possible acquaint the Master with it.
11. Off duty, when anybody goes out, he should not take his purse with him.
12. While out on duty not more than two annas (2d.) should be spent on refreshment.
13. None should lay violent hands on another, even in self-defence. Wrestling and boxing are strictly prohibited.
14. Under no circumstances should anyone tell a lie or make use of violent language.
15. Unless and until the Master's permission is secured, none should visit his relations or friends.
16. Without the Master's permission none should leave the Manzil even for a while.
17. Shaving and hair-cutting are allowed only on Thursdays and Sundays in the mornings.
18. None should complain to the Master about another's breach of any of the Master's orders, except in specified cases.

All the disciples were required to retire at 9 p.m. and to get up at 4 a.m. It was one of the strictest orders of Baba that everyone should have a cold bath between four and five in the morning.

Baba occasionally ordered one or more members of the party to fast for a day or two. Those who had to fast were not exempted from work. On the contrary they were given more work to do. Sometimes they were ordered to feast others, especially blind or lame beggars, whom they had to bring to the Manzil from various localities. On one occasion Baba ordered those who had to fast to find at least two hundred beggars for the purpose of feeding and clothing them. There

is no dearth of beggars in Bombay; but Baba did not want able-bodied vagabonds, he wanted those who were disabled, which made the task more difficult. Moreover, even when a disabled beggar was found, it was not always easy to induce him to go to the Manzil. When the two hundred beggars were brought to the Manzil they were fed, clothed, and bathed. Baba himself took part in serving them, and garlanded some of them before their departure, to the astonishment of his disciples and the bewilderment of the beggars. On another occasion, when Baba's entire party was kept on water only, no less than eight hundred beggars, able-bodied as well as disabled, were fed and clothed.

Baba occasionally went to the other extreme and compelled some of his disciples to over-eat. On one occasion, at dinner-time, he selected half a dozen members of his party and commanded them to sit near him. To their joy he served first sweetmeats, then chocolates, and afterwards fresh and dried fruits—everything in liberal quantities. Their appetites were fully satisfied, but more was to come. The joy with which they had begun to eat turned to discomfort as soon as Baba ordered various cooked dishes to be brought in. Those dishes, too, he served to them extravagantly. With bent heads and wry faces, in breathless silence, they went on stuffing their stomachs. As soon as their dishes became empty they were promptly filled by Baba. Then, with stomachs overflowing, they entreated him not to compel them to eat more. Thereupon he gave them a cold drink.

One hour every morning was devoted to meditation, and Hindu and Parsi disciples were required to attend their respective places of worship each day, while Mahommedan disciples went to the nearest mosque every Friday. Every disciple was required to work. Certain hours were set aside for games. On birthdays and holidays there were festivities.

Baba used suddenly to ask a disciple what thought he had in his mind, and whatever the thought he was required to express it. A meeting of the disciples was held daily, with Baba presiding, to discuss subjects of interest.

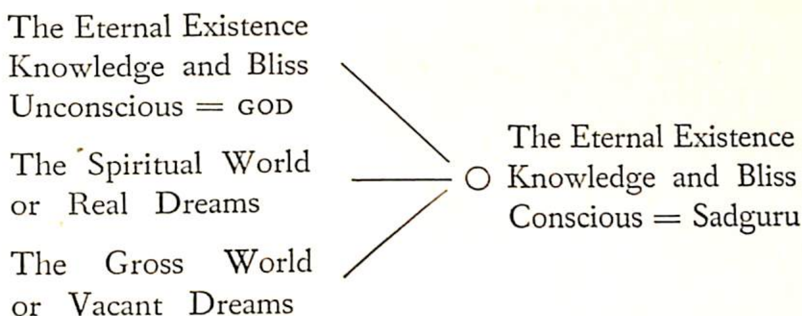
On the morning of February 4, 1923, Baba gave instructions that if on that day he got ill, or lost consciousness, or if anything else happened to his body, a physician should not be brought, even though he asked for medical treatment. Baba had been quite well, but in the evening he seemed to be brooding over something, and at nine o'clock he told his disciples not to go to bed but to play the game of atya-patya in the courtyard. He played with them, and in the course of the game injured his toe. Immediately afterwards Baba became violently ill, vomited, trembled, and for an hour appeared to be in agony, during which time he declared that he would be glad to have his leg taken off if he could be relieved of the pain. Then suddenly he got better and became normal. In the meantime two of his disciples had gone for a bone-setter, but Baba refused to see him.

During this period Baba was active in work and play, and himself did much of the more disagreeable work of the house; but often he was unwell, and for a period of a week had a mysterious wound on one of his shoulders. For certain periods he fasted entirely.

SOME DISCOURSES

I am told that Baba was a ready and witty conversationalist and a good story-teller. He has never given public discourses, but in private he could be highly eloquent. At the Manzil he gave many addresses to his disciples on spiritual and philosophical subjects, and the following extracts are from notes made by two of his disciples at the time.

Having written the following formula on the notice-board one day, Baba went on to say:



A God-realized being (Jivan-Mukta) rarely puts his mind to worldly things, and those rare occasions are invariably those on which he has to do some exceptional good to others, which he cannot do otherwise. The residents of the East End of Bombay are the subjects of His Majesty King George. But does His Majesty know anything about them or where they live? Certainly not. However, if the King wishes to put his mind to it, i.e., to know about these people, he will be promptly furnished with the necessary information. In the same way, a Jivan-Mukta can go to the very source of anything, if he so wishes, by putting his mind to it, and that too, unlike the King, without giving any trouble to others. But, as regards worldly things, generally he doesn't do so. The interest he appears to you to take in things that belong to this world, by word or deed, is simply casual.

On the same day in the evening Baba delivered a lecture on the subject of "Sanskaras," the substance of which is as follows:

A yogi (one who is in the fourth plane) does not attain liberation from the rounds of births and deaths, because he is not still free from sanskaras or impressions left on the mind while doing any action. Good actions create good sanskaras and bad actions bad sanskaras. Not only deeds but also thoughts create sanskaras. Aye, even talking, hearing, seeing, eating, drinking, sleeping, and

all subtle movements give rise to sanskaras. These sanskaras have to be worked out with mechanical precision unless wiped out by a Perfect Master. Your present existence, your pains and pleasures, your virtues and vices are due to your past sanskaras or A'mal as termed by the Mahommedan Sufis. In other words, your present life is the result in gross form of your past subtle impressions. Whether good or bad, unless and until all the sanskaras are wiped out, liberation from the chain of births and deaths cannot be attained. Good actions bind a man with a golden chain, bad actions with an iron one, but of whatever metal the chain may be, there can be no freedom until it is removed.

Ordinary yoga practices bring about good sanskaras but not mukti (liberation); therefore, if one aspires after mukti, one must have the impressions of neither virtue nor vice on one's credit or debit side, but a "clean slate." And one can never have a clean slate unless one has succeeded in getting the grace of a Perfect Master. A Sadguru can wipe out the sanskaras of anybody. The countless sanskaras of the average person may be likened to a heap of rubbish which it is impossible for him to remove, but which a Sadguru can destroy in a second.

On the following day a disciple informed the Master that a certain friend of his upbraided him for staying with Baba and tauntingly quoted a couplet of the Persian poet Jalálu'ddín Rúmí, the purport of which was that to reach heaven by following a neighbour was in reality equivalent to going to hell. Whereupon Baba observed:

Your friend's interpretation of the Maulana's couplet is quite correct and I heartily concur in the poet's opinion. One should earn heaven by one's own exertions, i.e., by deserving it. It should not be gained by the help or favour of anybody. To go into Paradise without deserving it, merely through the favour or grace of somebody, is no doubt not only equal to but worse than burning in the fires of hell. Consequently, if your friend restrained himself within the limits of this interpretation he was quite right.

But if his intention was to ridicule you for, or taunt you with, following me, then he made a fool of himself. You should have told him that the question of heaven or hell does not concern you at all, for as you have dedicated yourself to me, you have risen above it. You should have quoted the poet's couplet which says that those who are beggars at the door of a Perfect Master are not in need of either heaven or hell. Have I not held out to you the expectation of something far higher than the dream of Paradise? By following me, you will come to understand Truth or God and fathom the secret of the universe. It is impossible for anyone to obtain this knowledge without the help of a Murshid or Perfect Master. Attempts in this direction are sure to end in disappointment, without the guidance of a God-realized person.

Baba then quoted one of the verses of the Hazrat Hafiz, the translation of which is:

Without the guidance of a Perfect Master, do not enter the path of love: I have failed hundreds of times while doing so by self-help.

Afterwards he quoted one of the couplets of Jalálu'ddín Rúmí, which says:

Priest Rúmí would never have become a Perfect Master if he had not become the slave of Shams Tabrez.

Continuing his discourse, Baba remarked that he, whose object is God, cares no more for heaven than hell, and then quoted another verse of Hafiz, in which the poet says:

Inasmuch as I want my beloved in both the worlds, what do I care for either heaven or hell and for houris and slaves therein?

Baba concluded by remarking:

Your friend does not know his own mind. To say that the Prophet of Arabia will lead all Moslems to paradise is beggarliness

that beggars description. He says that one must deserve heaven, but at the same time believes that his Prophet will lead him to heaven, even though he is not fit for it. His case is hopeless. To preach what one does not practise is hypocrisy in its worst form.

One day Baba said to one of the party, "God bless you!" On hearing these words the disciple appeared to be much amused. On being asked by Baba as to the cause of his amusement, he replied, "We generally find it very difficult to follow the drift of your utterances. Your words have a deeper meaning than that which they appear to bear on the surface." Baba said:

There are two kinds of knowledge, the worldly knowledge or the knowledge relating to the material world, and divine knowledge or the knowledge which is acquired after becoming one with God. Any person, after becoming spiritually perfect, when he deals with matters pertaining to this material world, reflects in his words and actions his secular attainments as much as the divinity that is in him, although he may not directly utilize either kind of knowledge. The deeds and utterances of such a person are invested with a sort of secrecy and grandeur, but this is often lost sight of by worldly people. A ruby in the hands of a rustic will not be appreciated by him, but in the hands of a jeweller it will speak its value. The person who has become one with God is able to make the best use of his worldly knowledge without directly drawing upon it.

On the same day in the evening Baba delivered another discourse, in which, after remarking that the disposition of a person after his union with God remains the same, he said:

Before he realized God, his anger, his curses, and his violent language did harm to himself since there was egoism in him. Remember that where egoism is there is no God; and where God is there is no egoism. The perfect saint's words and deeds in the divine state are free from egoism, but his disposition has not

changed, despite the experience of Truth. However, you must bear in mind that when he gives vent to his wrath, the person with whom he is angry is much benefited.

Baba then quoted some lines of Hafiz, in which the poet says:

My mind used to crave after seeing various objects, but since the day on which I saw you, I have had no desire save that of seeing you.

Explaining the poem, Baba said:

The couplet clearly states that it is in the poet's nature to see various objects, but on seeing Him (the Beloved) he no longer wishes to see anything or anybody else, though the desire of seeing is still there. Formerly, he wished to see a number of objects, but now he wishes to see God only. The desire of the poet has undergone a change, because he has got rid of egoism. Any egoistic trait has been transformed into a divine trait. Likewise the trait of losing one's temper to which a person is addicted may not leave him, even after he becomes spiritually perfect, but its consequence is different, inasmuch as there is divinity behind it. And because there is divinity behind it, the person who has to bear with it becomes the recipient of some benefit.

On another occasion Baba said:

There are two states, viz., internal and external. They are separated from each other by a mental curtain. Now to cleanse the internal condition is so difficult that an ordinary person cannot do so. Without the help of a Sadguru, it is impossible for most persons to have an absolutely pure heart. But one must do one's best to keep the external, i.e., the body, quite clean. The shariat (external practice or form) of every religion enjoins its followers to practise cleanliness. By following all the rules of shariat closely and devoutly, one will come across a Sadguru or a Salik. Until one has the luck to be the disciple of a Sadguru, one must follow the tenets of one's creed. The observance of external cleanliness

brightens up to a little extent the internal life, and one is certainly benefited by offering prayers and performing ceremonies.

Proceeding, Baba emphatically stated that one must either follow one's creed or a Perfect Master, and that the course between the two is fraught with danger. By the middle course Baba meant the practising of yoga exercises. He ended his discourse by asserting:

When once the internal condition is cleansed through the favour of a Sadguru, the external condition need not be cared for. You may know that many saints do not care for the cleanliness of their bodies and are found in dirty places.

On the same day in the afternoon Baba distributed chocolates among those who were present, as was his custom. On being asked how they liked the chocolates, all except one expressed great pleasure. After some time Baba asked if they were still enjoying the pleasure they felt while eating the sweets. The reply was unanimously in the negative. Whereupon he said:

When a good thing is given to one, the mind is pleased, but soon after settles down into its previous state; if some bitter medicine is forced upon it, it revolts but almost immediately reverts to its normal state. This shows that both the pleasures and pains of this world are transient. A few minutes ago you ate chocolates with relish, but that enjoyment has now become a thing of the past and has resulted in nothing. So with all pleasures and pains. One of the greatest enjoyments of the carnally-minded is sexual intercourse. But its pleasure lasts only so long as the intercourse lasts. No sooner does the intercourse come to an end than the pleasure ends. Compare the transiency of earthly pleasures with the permanency of spiritual bliss, and you will find the difference between the two.

Once Baba, noticing that two members of his party were very morose, remarked:

Every effect must have its cause. As the griefs and sorrows of this world are imaginary and self-created, there cannot be any substantial cause for them. The cause being imaginary, there is no necessity to take griefs and sorrows to heart. It is also childish to be enamoured of the pleasures of the world. Be passive spectators of all the events that occur in the world, whether they concern you or not. Keep your minds free and happy.

He added much more in the same strain, and ended by quoting his favourite Hafiz, in which the poet says:

O Hafiz! the sorrows as well as the pleasures of this world are ephemeral. Truth is beyond them. Therefore always be happy.

On the following day a disciple requested Baba to explain the statement of Swami Vivekananda that the only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice, and who can immediately come down to the level of the student and transfer his soul to the student's soul, see through the student's eyes, hear through the student's ears, and understand through his mind. In the course of his exposition Baba observed:

A teacher who is a Master of Arts but who wishes to teach alphabet to children, must of necessity bring himself down to their level. Then only he will be able to teach them and step by step bring them to his level. If he does not come down from the heights of his attainments to their level, then all his labour for them will end in nothing. Similarly a Perfect Master has to bring himself down to the level of his disciples so that he may be able to impart his knowledge to them. He has also to take into consideration the circumstances in which he finds himself before doing anything. Take the case of the Arabian Prophet. When he was harassed by his enemies and threatened with premature death, he actually fled from Mecca and took refuge in Medina, and by so doing he acted just as an ordinary man when confronted with such an emergency.

Mujzubs cannot act like Saliks and Sadgurus, for they are so much drowned in the Sea of Divinity that they have not the slightest consciousness of their body. They cannot impart knowledge to others and show what Truth is.

On the same day in the evening Baba, in the course of his discourse on spiritual light, observed:

There is, besides our two external eyes, one internal eye. This internal eye, which may be called the spiritual eye, really sees through the two external eyes, and is located between the two eyebrows. Saints see God with the internal eye and the world with the external eyes.

On an occasion early in 1923 Baba, seeing that a few of his disciples were dejected, made the following among other statements:

One generally passes through three stages in the spiritual life. The first stage is of burning enthusiasm, when the aspirant is imbued with the keen desire of seeing and experiencing the unknown. The second stage is of disgust and disappointment, the third is of divine bliss. The second stage, in which you are at present, is very long. Since you cannot escape from it or remedy it, you must put up with it cheerfully. Don't leave me in any case.

On another occasion he said:

Realization is the same for all. The differences among Prophets and Sadgurus lie not in the power, but in the authority to use it. That which is given by a Sadguru to his chargeman is not power, but the authority to use it. A Sadguru, strictly speaking, gives nothing to anybody. He merely shows the treasure that is within him. . . .

No Sadguru has authority to use his power after dropping his corporeal frame. Mind you! he has the power, but not the authority to use it. Wherever you see the tomb of a Sadguru, rest assured that there his power is. But if a devotee is benefited by worshipping

it, never for a moment believe that the Sadguru was the cause of his benefit. The devotee may merely be said to have utilized the power and thereby brought a blessing upon himself. A Sadguru can do good to others only so long as he lives in this gross world; after leaving mortality he cannot make anyone cross a single plane, and cannot wipe out anybody's sanskaras; though to those of his followers who call upon his infinite existence, his infinite state renders help according to the devotion behind the call.

A disciple asked Baba why the Sadguru Gous Ali Shah Kalandar of Paniput acknowledged as many as nineteen saints as his masters, of whom eleven were Moslems and the rest Hindus. Baba replied:

One gets God-realization at the hands of one Master, but for knowledge or understanding, which the Moslem Sufis call Irfan and the Hindu sages Dhyana, it may be necessary for him to approach more Masters than one. As a rule, the Murshid, who makes his disciple one with God, also gives him understanding, i.e., restores his gross consciousness. The case of Kalandar was exceptional, but not more so than my case. Babajan made me realize God, but for understanding I was driven to go to Shri Upasni Maharaj, who took eight years to perform his duty to me. During this period, I called upon other Masters too, but they passed me on to Upasni Maharaj. If they would have restored even a little of my lost consciousness they would also have been recognized as my Masters.

About this time Baba made an assertion in Urdu which, translated literally, meant:

It is better to die than to live, better to fear than to die, and better to do than to fill.

The disciples could make neither head nor tail of this, and requested him to explain it to them. Whereupon he said:

By living, I mean leading a worldly life; by dying becoming

one with God; by fearing returning to gross consciousness after the unification with the Almighty; by filling, I mean filling the hearts of others by divine love; and by doing making others spiritually perfect. The meaning of my saying therefore is, Better to be one with God than to lead a worldly life; better to return to gross unconsciousness after union with God than to remain unconscious and selfishly enjoy divine bliss; better to fill the hearts of others with divine love than to remain indifferent to humanity, and better to make others one with God than merely to fill their hearts with divine love.

APPARENTLY DENOUNCED BY HIS MASTER

After the party had been at the Manzil for two months Baba paid a visit to Sakori to see Upasni Maharaj. He took one disciple with him, and on his return sent the rest of his disciples on a visit for two days. One day Baba said to his disciples: "Time will come when my master, Shri Upasni Maharaj, will begin to speak against me, will run me down, and will not only not acknowledge me as his equal, but will insinuate that I am a hypocrite." The disciples were surprised, but they received no explanation, and Baba continued to send them to Sakori. But Baba himself did not go after the first visit, though repeatedly invited by Upasni Maharaj. He said, when asked the reason why he refused: "My reluctance to go to the Maharaj is due to the aversion to the lightening of the burden of my spiritual agony by him. The burden that he would take from me he would have to bear, and I cannot allow myself to be the cause of his sufferings." On a later occasion Baba said:

My sufferings are twofold, since I am the chargeman of two Masters. Their charges are at present almost unbearable; knowing this, Shri Upasni wants me to go to him so that he may be able to

lighten my burden. But as I know he will have to suffer terribly by mitigating my spiritual agony, I do not like to call upon him. On the other hand I am unable to bear cheerfully the intense spiritual pain. . . .

The world is against spirituality, and so against me, as I have so often told you. Don't be hasty in forming opinions regarding my words and deeds. My words will prove to be true, but I alone know how, when, and where. You will not understand them, because to understand mystical statements supernatural intelligence is required.

At last, in the middle of October, Baba left the Manzil to visit Upasni Maharaj at Sakori. On his arrival he was welcomed with joy. Upasni made his disciples do homage to Baba, and himself waited upon him. Baba stayed eighteen hours, and then returned to Bombay, going at once to bed. Afterwards he said that not since he had been at the Manzil had he taken such good rest as on that day.

Baba continued to send his disciples to Sakori, and Upasni told them to obey Baba in everything; he said:

Carry out all his orders and wishes. In doing so you may have to suffer, but you must bear every sort of suffering cheerfully. If your suffering seems beyond endurance, draw the attention of the Master to it, and he will help you. Put up with any discomfort, but do not let yourselves leave hold of him. Even though the whole world and myself included were on the other side you should stay on his side.

At the end of February Baba's mother, Shirinbanoo, came to see him at the Manzil with the news that Upasni Maharaj had begun to rail against him. Baba warned his disciples not to be misled by these attacks and not to form a bad opinion of Upasni, and declared with force that he acknowledged Upasni as one of his masters. Baba sent one of his most

intimate disciples to Upasni, who had then confined himself to a small wooden cabin; he reviled and denounced Baba to the disciple, saying, "Your Master is not a saint, and I am no longer responsible for him."

Before he left Sakori, Baba's disciple asked Upasni why he had shut himself up in the cabin. "If it is for our sake," he went on, "that you have imposed this suffering upon yourself, we don't want you to do it. On the contrary we should like to see you happy." Upasni then asked the disciple to break the wooden cabin, which the disciple, a young and sturdy man, at once proceeded to do. Thereupon Upasni reproached him angrily for what he had done. "You told me to do so," the young man replied. "Will you do whatever I ask you to do?" asked Upasni. "Yes," he was answered. "Then bring that big stone and throw it at my head with all your strength." This the disciple refused to do, and Upasni continued to abuse him and Baba until the young man went away. This reviling of one another by Sadgurus is not uncommon: more will be said about it later.

A few days prior to this event Babajan, who had not spoken of Baba from the day that he first met her, asked one of her devotees for a photograph of Baba; when she received it she kissed it, and said, "My darling son."

THE FIRST ASHRAM ENDS

Among the work done at the Manzil during this period was the preparation of a biography of Upasni Maharaj in the Urdu language, written by two of Baba's disciples, which was published under the title of *Garibonka Asra* (Protector of the Poor). Baba also arranged for another biography of Upasni to be written in the Marathi language by Nath Mahadeo, a

well-known Marathi novelist; this second biography was published immediately after leaving the Manzil.[1]

During the Manzil period Baba made a number of visits with the disciples to places not far from the city. On two occasions he went for longer journeys; one was a trip to Ajmer, the capital of the isolated British province of Ajmer-Merwara in Rajputana, a city of great antiquity. Here Baba was accompanied by seven disciples; he was unwell during the entire visit, having from fifty to sixty motions daily, of different colours, and for three or four days did not take food. The disciples were ordered to pay their respects at the tomb of Kwaja Molnuddin Chisti, who died in 1235. Kwaja Chisti is worshipped by both Mahommedans and Hindus. Leaving Ajmer, Baba took them to Pushkar, a place of Hindu pilgrimage, where there is a temple, the only one in India, dedicated to Brahma. Baba asked his disciples to behave there according to Hindu customs. He himself, however, did not take part in any of the ceremonies.

On the return to the Manzil the cause of Baba's illness appeared. He asked at once if anyone had broken his orders. Nobody had done so. He again asked each one in the house in turn if he had been disobedient, and was told no. Then he took hold of a dhobi and brought him to the spot at which he had misconducted himself, and the man, aghast, confessed.

A second trip was made with a few disciples to Malangadh, a hill at Kalyan. On the summit of the hill is the tomb of the Mahommedan Sadguru, Haji Malangshah. Baba told the disciples to climb the hill to pay homage at the tomb, which they did. The climb was a severe one, and when they returned

[1] There is also a Gujarati life of Upasni Maharaj by Behli J. Irani and Soribji M. Desai, the veteran Parsi writer. Baba sent a request to the latter at Navsari (Baroda) to write the life; but he refused, saying he was too busy and did not want to do it; but it is said that Upasni Maharaj appeared to him in a waking dream and ordered him to do it.

they were exhausted; but Baba would not allow anyone to drink until they had reached Kalyan station, fourteen miles away!

When Baba first arrived at the Manzil the house was immediately besieged by those who wanted to see him; but during the whole of the period of his stay he saw with occasional exceptions none but a few friends and relatives of his disciples.

On the last day of March 1923 Baba told his disciples that they should return home and that he proposed to go to Ahmednagar with certain of them. As the house had been taken on lease for a year, it had been expected that the party would remain together for another two months. But, as we shall see, one of the characteristics of Baba is the sudden change of decisions and the alteration of plans without warning. Baba's farewell to his disciples was in the following words:

> I now intend to bring the Manzil stay to an end. I propose to go with only a few of you to Ahmednagar. I shall have to send most of you to your homes. Do not worry at all. I shall allow those of you who will have to leave me to join me again. The separation will only be temporary. But remember that henceforth discipline will be more strict and the mode of living more simple. Whatever I may ask you to do you will have to do. Do not think of joining me at all if you are going to be ashamed to do menial work. You may have to do the work of masons, of coolies; in short, any kind of manual work. Therefore think well before you resolve to join me again.

The disciples who were sent home were ordered, among other things, to avoid fish, flesh, and eggs, and always to eat sufficient.

SHRI MEHER BABA
NAVSARI, 1932





SHRI MEHER BABA
AHMEDNAGAR, 1923

JOURNEYINGS AND FASTS

A visit to the city of Ahmednagar followed with the remaining few disciples. This city, founded by Ahmad Nizam Shah in 1494, has played an important part in the history of the Deccan. It was for over a hundred years the capital of the Nizam Shahi kings, and possesses some of the best examples of Mahommedan architecture. Baba stayed in a house near the Zendi Gate, belonging to one of his devoted followers. At the end of April, Baba with his disciples paid a visit to the Happy Valley, thirteen miles away, where it is believed that Rama with his faithful Sita and loving Lakshmi lived for some time. During the three days' stay at the Government dak bungalow in the Happy Valley, Baba celebrated the fifty-third birthday of Upasni Maharaj. He ordered his disciples to abstain from food completely that day, but to cook a large quantity of food and distribute it to the poor of the village. In the evening the arti ceremony of the Maharaj was performed, and was attended by a number of the villagers. Afterwards Baba returned to Ahmednagar.

Next day he visited Arangaon, about five miles from Ahmednagar railway station, where there is the tomb of Buaji Bua, a Hindu saint who is said to have entered his grave when alive. Arangaon is a small village inhabited by poor peasants; there was a military camp there during the war, but it had fallen into a state of dilapidation. Baba, to the amazement of his disciples, said he would like to stay there, and asked them to clear out the refuse and thorns around the building once used as the post office and to make it habitable. They started on the work next day; Baba remained there for four days, and then returned to Ahmednagar.

During the course of the stay at Arangaon, Baba gave a

discourse to the disciples, part of which, noted down by one of them, was as follows:

To be rid of "sanskaric" (material—family) bonds, and freed from the illusions of "Maya" (here meaning "attachment"), are the first essentials of true spiritual awakening. "Renunciation" was the watchword of all the greatest teachers of the world—Mahommed and Zoroaster, Christ and Krishna alike—though in different words. But people take their teaching literally; the real spirit of the word is not understood. It is the mind, the innermost man, that they must renounce; that is the root from whence all desires spring; the mind must become a "Fakir" (renouncer)—a "Sadhu" (ascetic), and then renunciation of the highest order is attained. When the mind is spiritually enlightened, and is at the same time fortunate enough to retain ordinary consciousness, the performing of the "sanskaric" (family—worldly) duties is renunciation too; as in that state, whatever actions are taken, they are not for self—but for the benefit and advancement of others.

The second week of May, Baba summoned his disciples, and said to them:

After taking full counsel with yourselves, I want all of you to make a choice from the following three proposals which I make to you. The first is that you stay with me, but if you do so, you will have to carry out all my commands. Life with me will not be a bed of roses. On the contrary, for spiritual reasons, I may have to subject you to many a hardship. No servants are going to attend upon you. You will have to do whatever manual work I ask you to do. If you cannot see your way to live in my company under these conditions, then by all means you may separate from me. After separating from me you may either break off all connection with me or not. But if you wish to continue, you will have to carry out a few orders of mine, particularly orders regarding your residence and occupations. Think well and clearly before coming to a decision.

None liked to break off the connection with Baba entirely. Thirteen decided to live in his company, and the rest to separate from him for some time but to act according to his orders. The thirteen who decided to live in his company were Behramji F. Irani, Gustadji Hansotia, Jal (Baba's brother), Adi K. Irani, Aga Baidul, Uncle Rustam, Babu Ubale, Ramzu, Pendu, Padri, Slamson, a Zoroastrian who was nicknamed Nervous, and a Mahommedan nicknamed Bar-soap.

On the following day in the morning, before breakfast, Baba left the Khushru quarters, asking the thirteen to follow him. After going a little distance Baba informed them that he intended to take them not to Arangaon but somewhere else. They wondered what he meant. A mile and a half farther on they found themselves crossing the dry bed of the Sina River. Within an hour they came near the station dharamsala, or inn, which is under the control of the local District Board, and in which anybody except lunatics and criminals can take shelter. Baba decided to put up at this public inn for a couple of days or so. When the disciples were partaking of supper Baba said to them that from that time he would abstain from all solid foods for several days, and for two months thereafter Baba lived only on liquid food.

On May 14th Baba with the members of his party returned on foot to Arangaon, where they occupied the building which some of them had repaired only a few days back. The sojourn at Arangaon proved to be of eleven days only. During this short period the disciples entirely repaired a building which had been occupied as an officers' mess, and made it fit for habitation. So, from the post office building, Baba and his disciples removed to that building. The big hall was occupied by the disciples, and the room at the south-east corner by Baba. On the same day, just before going to bed, Baba said to them that he had resolved to leave Arangaon in a few days

with a view to making an extensive tour of India, and perhaps of adjoining countries.

The result of this change of plan was that the preparations for farming were brought to an end and the repairs to the camp ceased. On May 25th everything was cleared from Arangaon, and his party left Ahmednagar in the afternoon. On the 27th the party stopped at Agra, and Baba visited the Taj Mahal. Next day they went to Muttra and bathed in the sacred River Jumna, next morning setting off for Karachi, via Delhi, which was reached by the 31st. At Karachi they stayed for a week, and then went to Quetta, the principal city of Baluchistan, on June 7th, arriving there the day after. Once more the plans were changed, and instead of going into Persia as was intended, Baba decided to go to Kashmir by train, and to walk from there to Bombay. Special preparations were made for this journey, which was to be done by all the party in kafnis, or ascetics' robes. During all this time Baba had been taking nothing but liquid; the other members of the party while in Quetta practised partial or complete fasts for twenty-four or thirty-two hours. On June 24th they were ready to start, but Baba decided to go to Calcutta instead of Kashmir, and to walk from there to Bombay; but before they left Baba made another decision, to start to walk from Ahmedabad instead. He allowed some of the party to go to Gujarat and to start their walk from there. On the 26th Baba left by train for Ahmedabad, arriving there on the 29th.

The walk from Ahmedabad started at 2.30 a.m. on July 1st. The instructions to all were to repeat in a low voice the name of God in their respective religious terms while walking throughout the journey. Baba walked at the head of the party, carrying his blanket, etc., across his shoulders in the same way as the rest. Bagreja was reached by sunset the first day, the party putting up at the dharamsala, or inn.

At 4 a.m. the next morning they started off again, but by that afternoon most of the party were exhausted, partly through the burdens they had to carry and partly because their food and drink were strictly rationed, and Baba agreed that they could take the train for Bharoch, which was reached early in the morning of July 3rd. Continuing the journey on foot, thirty-eight miles was walked that day, Ankleshwar being reached in the evening. During the day, which was very hot, Baba instructed all the members of the party to throw the Mogul caps which each one was wearing into the river, where they stuck in the mud; soon afterwards they had to cross the river, when some of the party got caught in the mud and were much alarmed, for they had difficulty in extracting themselves; but none suffered any injury. Early next morning the party left by train for Surat, arriving there at 6 a.m., and walked again for the rest of the day another thirty-eight miles. The following day twenty-four miles were covered, arriving at Navsari in the early evening. It was remarked on the journey that when the rest of the party was exhausted and on the point of breaking down, Baba was always fresh and in the best of spirits, but when only a short distance had been done and the party was not over-tired, Baba did not look up to the mark. Arriving at Navsari on the 5th, Baba decided next day to go on to Nasik and to stay there for three months. Nasik was reached on the 7th, and next day, after a bungalow had been secured, Baba changed his plans again and settled to return to Arangaon, which was carried out on the following day. Two days later Baba said that instead of occupying themselves with duties at the camp it would be better for the members of the party to return to Bombay and to get work there. Indeed, Baba laid it down as a condition that each of them must find some work: if nothing else offered, to engage himself as an ordinary coolie. That

day, the first time for a long period, Baba took a meal of grains.

In the middle of August, during the monsoon, Baba and five of his party went to stay at a bungalow at Lonavla, and on the 22nd Baba left for Poona by car, but came back the following day. The next day, however, he returned to Poona to stay at the house of a Mahommedan disciple, where he remained until the end of the month, returning to Bombay.

During this period the disciples remaining in Bombay had been living at the building used as an office for book publishing, much to the annoyance of the landlord, and on September 2nd Baba decided to take living accommodation elsewhere. This was arranged the same evening, but the next morning Baba left the new rooms and took others in a new building opposite the Kohinoor mills; but hardly had that been settled upon before Baba gave instructions for other rooms to be searched for, which were found in Irani Mansion No. 6. There the party stayed for six weeks, and on October 19th, the office in Bombay having been closed, the party packed up and set off on foot for Sakori, taking their belongings on a bullock cart. Eleven days later the party reached Bableshwar, ten miles from Sakori, and there Baba intended to remain with one disciple, sending the others on to Sakori to pay their respects to Shri Upasni Maharaj. Next day, November 1st, the party set off to Sakori. There in the afternoon they presented themselves to Shri Upasni Maharaj, who had converted a portion of his hut into a small wooden cage, in which he had placed himself for the past ten months. By Baba's orders the members of the party had fasted since the previous evening, and they were given tea. They returned to Bableshwar the same evening. Next morning they went off by motor lorry to Ahmednagar, putting up at the Khushru quarters.

There the arrangements for the visit to Persia were discussed, and Baba said that he would take eleven disciples with him and start at the beginning of February. In the meantime he gave definite instructions to various members of the Mandali, and decided that the others should pass the time at or near Karachi. That city was reached on November 14th, and a bungalow was taken for the stay. A week later, however, Baba decided to go back to Bombay by sea, and arrangements were made for the journey to be started next day. While at Karachi a letter had been received from one of the disciples who had been sent to Bombay to obtain the visas from the Persian Consul to the effect that the latter would not grant the visas unless the members of the party presented themselves to him in person: all except Baba, who, said the Consul, had already come to him in his office to say that "he will send his passport with his man for him to endorse." Baba, however, had not been in Bombay for a month and a half.

Bombay was reached on November 24th, and Baba announced that he would pass some time in seclusion in the neighbourhood of Lonavla, taking only two disciples with him. The party was therefore broken up, and Baba did not stay in Lonavla; he returned to Poona, and until the end of the year wandered about the country fasting, most of the time in seclusion. From December 1st Baba observed a thirty-four hours' fast every two days, increasing the fast to forty hours towards the end of the month, taking no food or drink; during the non-fasting period of the forty-eight hours he took faral—liquid and fruit, no grain. On December 31st he sent for one of his disciples to meet him at Lonavla station and to bring him a bottle of freshly made cocoa in milk, and this was done. Baba then went to Bombay.

FIRST VISIT TO PERSIA

During the greater part of January 1924 Baba maintained his fasts, and at the end of the month the passports were got ready for the tour to Persia. On February 2nd Baba sent his disciples to visit Shri Narayan Maharaj, who was at that time in Bombay. Next day Baba received a letter that Babajan was ill. Eleven days later the news came that Shri Upasni Maharaj had left his cage on the 12th, and Baba ordered a fast for twenty-four hours. It was decided to celebrate Baba's thirtieth birthday on the 19th, and to start for Persia on the 22nd. This was done, Baba taking eight disciples with him. One member of the party was ill with fever, and by the time Bushire was reached several more were ill, and the day after landing another collapsed with fever. Baba decided to return to India, leaving two disciples to proceed into the interior of Persia. The same day passages were taken on the cargo steamer *Barjora*. As usual, Baba and his company travelled in the lowest class. Baba's disciple Adi says of the journey:

> The steamer was found to have limited accommodation for passengers, as it was full of fowl, cows, goats, donkeys, and horses, besides a large number of uncivilized Arabs. The behaviour of the latter was primitive in the extreme. Except for killing goats and fowls in dozens for their meals, and eating them lustily, they did not seem to find any other object in existence. Some of them would even sit for necessities just where they cooked their food. As for manners, one of them kicked away Nervous's bedding while the deck was being washed, though the kicker was at the time on good terms with the party.

By the second week in March the party was back again in Karachi. There it was decided to go to Nepal, but at Ruxol, the frontier station, admission into Nepal was refused, and the party went to Kabir's tomb at Maghar. About fifty poor

were fed here, and the surplus stores that had been collected for the Persian tour were distributed to the needy. During the stay here a quarrel occurred among some Sadhus, when Baba intervened and gave them a discourse on "How to behave when one tries the life of a Sadhu." The party went on to Cawnpore, where Baba dismissed them, remaining alone and arriving back at Arangaon at the end of March.

This record of changed plans I have related in some detail as an example of Baba's method, on which I shall have something to say in a later section of this book.

THE SECOND ASHRAM: MEHERABAD

At Arangaon in March 1924 Baba called his disciples to him, and they began to settle down once more. A severe discipline was observed. All had to get up at 5 a.m. From 6 to 7 a.m. each one had to say prayers by himself according to his respective faith. Between 7 and 8 a.m. there was breakfast, consisting of tea without milk and a few almonds, the latter being given only to those who were weak. From eight o'clock work started, which consisted of repairing the buildings, erecting a new room for Baba, gardening, etc. At eleven baths could be taken, afterwards a meal consisting of rice and dal, and clothes had to be washed; afterwards rest. At three o'clock all got together to sing the special bhajan (song) composed by Baba. From four-thirty to six work proceeded once more. Then the supper of wheat-bread and potatoes was prepared. In the evening there was a lecture by Baba or music, and all retired at ten o'clock. Frequently there were games, and sometimes the villagers came in large numbers.

One afternoon a man appeared at the well, and, after drinking, declared himself to be hungry. He was taken before

Baba, who, noticing his rickety figure, with eyes absorbed in deep meditation, declared him to be a "Musta" in a very good mental state. Food and sweets were given to him under Baba's orders. When asked as to his native place, and the reason for his present state, the man could not give an audible answer, but nodded his head. Baba gave him a shirt and pants, and made him put them on in place of the piece of rag he was wearing.

In the evening a weak old woman with her two sons came begging for food. She was also taken into Baba's presence. Seeing her pitiable plight, Baba ordered fresh dal-bhat to be cooked for her. In the meantime the elder boy, who had a small musical instrument, was asked by Baba to sing. He recited the instructive life of Shri Gopichand and Jalandarnath Maharaj in couplets while playing. After half an hour they were served with hot food. Some clothes were also given to the boys and their mother by Baba, and they departed.

Disagreeableness developed between two of the disciples because of one's request for a prayer carpet and the other's refusal. So when all of them were sitting around Baba in the evening he asked the injured man whether his anger against the other had subsided. He replied in the negative. Baba called him near, and explained:

> No matter however harsh the opposing party treats you, you should be calm. Always, however much you are found fault with or are blamed or have high words said to you, bear all with patience. This is real bravery and courage. Man can make a whole army yield to him, but he cannot overcome his own wrath.

Reverting to Christ's humility, Baba continued:

> There are three things that keep one away from God. They are Kam, Krodh, and Kanchan, i.e. Lust, Anger, and Greed. Lust and greed may be overcome, but the control of the temper is the

hardest of all. If you overcome these three enemies, you are a "Vali" (saint), a person who controls Kam, Krodh, and Kanchan.

On the subject of a true lover of God, Baba said:

> Just as a thirsty man in the desert under the hot sun values water more than pearls and diamonds, so also a true Lover of God wants him alone and considers every other object as trifling before him. The real lover desires no name, fame, or money but his beloved. He who does not possess such an attribute has self-interest instead.

One afternoon Baba went to the Happy Valley with four disciples. There in beautiful and historic surroundings Baba was in a very serene mood, and the following is Adi's version of what happened:

> At this time (after taking tea there), Baba appeared as if deeply absorbed in high thoughts. He breaks into an ecstasy, saying, "If you realize but a minute particle of that Knowledge, you will derive inexpressible bliss. Every external object will impart to you happiness, every substance will tell you its story in Knowledge. This whole universe which now appears as misery will shine forth as heaven. The spiritual master moulds only one chargeman like himself. To him he entrusts everything. He makes him his sole heir. The chargeman distributes this inherited treasure among his Circle, a few chosen ones whose number is twelve. According to their respective abilities, the treasure, i.e., Realization (which is the same to all) and power (which depends upon the position in the Circle and upon personal endurance before Realization) are distributed at the appointed time—then the Master of the chargeman expires. It may be that the Master keeps up his external body while internally he expires; in some instances, the Master's external body fails before his internal expiration takes place. Distribution means the entrusting of the chargeman's Internal Duty to the Circle members, so the chargeman gets free."

On May 7, 1924, Baba locked himself in the room which had been made insect-proof with wire nets over the few ventilations that there were. The room was specially prepared with great haste to enable Baba to remain in seclusion for months without food. I am told that he took food three and even four times a day before locking himself in. It was first arranged that after entering the room he would cease to speak even a single word and would give important orders in writing only. But in the evening after bhajan Baba talked a little from the room. He said that his health had been very much pulled down in one day, not because of the fast but because of spiritual working. He continued to have only liquids—tea, curd, curry, and water. After a week Baba left the room and took some dal-rice, and gave a discourse on "Reaching Truth." A few days later Baba went back into the room for a further five days. At the end of May he decided to leave Arangaon and go to Bombay en route for Quetta. On June 2nd the camp at Meherabad was deserted.

During the stay at Quetta one of the disciples became seriously ill with typhoid fever. Baba visited the patient constantly, but said that the case was hopeless. Nevertheless, nothing was spared to aid the sufferer. Several of the party were instructed to look after the sick man, and Baba went on to Karachi, leaving instructions for the burial of the man and pointing out the place in the cemetery where he was to be buried. He also ordered that immediately after the burial the members of the party were to go to the cinema. Soon after Baba left the man died. At the end of July he returned to Bombay, and the disciples were dispersed, Baba intending to take long solitary journeys.

There is no record available for the rest of this year; but in January 1925 Baba was at Arangaon again with the intention of staying there for a long period. Within a few weeks of

Baba again settling down at a fixed place the number of the Mandali members—the Mandali being those disciples who live with Baba under his direction—began to increase. Many of those who had been let off in Bombay at the end of July 1924 joined the Mandali again, and others who had been sent to remain at certain places were recalled. There were also many newcomers, and after a while the number increased to forty. In addition to these some of the older members of the Mandali came back to stay with Baba for short periods.

The camp began to be referred to as "Meherabad"—"abad" meaning "prosperous." After a time a small town sprang up, with a school, a hospital and dispensary, and an Ashram for lepers and the destitute. Hundreds of people came regularly to Baba for darshan, and many Mahar and Mang boys—of the untouchable class—came daily for singing and prayers—also for the sweets that were distributed. On March 21st the "Meher Charitable Hospital and Dispensary" was opened, under the charge of a qualified medical officer, to supply medical attendance without charge to all without respect to class or creed. The formal opening ceremony was performed by Rustamji. The work of the hospital was divided among the members of the Mandali. During the period in which the hospital was open, namely two years, there were nearly seven thousand out-patients and not less than five hundred in-patients.

At the end of March the Hazrat Babajan School was opened to impart free primary education to the village boys and girls of all classes and creeds, mostly untouchables. Free boarding and clothing were also provided. The school started with about twenty boys, and grew to one hundred and fifty boys and girls. The boys' and girls' schools were separate. At first the untouchables were taught apart, but after a few months all the boys were taught together. The vernacular Marathi

was taught to the girls, who had a woman teacher; the boys were also taught English.

During April and May the colony grew continually; the newcomers belonged to all religions. On one occasion Baba with the school teachers and others of the Mandali were washing about thirty boys attending the untouchable section of the school, a process which took about three and a half hours, for they were undeniably filthy. During the bathing some Brahmin visitors came for Baba's blessing, and as they bowed to him Baba said, "I am bathing untouchable boys. It is no use thus having darshana unless you are prepared to do the work I do." They felt the force of his words, and joined Baba and the others in bathing the boys. This washing of untouchable boys was constantly done. Baba played cricket and football with the boys and made a practice of giving personal supervision to the boys' feeding and general conduct. Bathing was part of the daily routine.

The birthday of Shri Upasni Maharaj was celebrated on May 10th. From eight o'clock in the morning crowds of people began to appear from the surrounding villages. They were supplied with food, and throughout the day dramatic recitals, lectures, and spiritual songs, chants and music were provided by devotees and by ascetics and others who had come to help Baba to entertain the company. A special procession of untouchables came from the village of Arangaon. To conclude the festivities there were fireworks and an open-air cinematograph show of the life of Sakubai, a woman saint. Baba received some thousands of people, and retired to his hut at 2 a.m. the next day.

A darshan was held by Baba every Thursday, in which devotees paid their respects in their various ways—the Hindus prostrating themselves at Baba's feet and placing their foreheads on his toe, the Mahommedans kissing his hand, others

joining their hands and putting them to their foreheads in abeyance, and so on. Visitors came in great crowds every Thursday from early morning until late at night. Cinematograph performances were sometimes held, the films consisting of the lives of Indian saints. The fasts and feasts of various religions were kept, though Baba used to point out that they had nothing to do with spirituality, nor did he advocate them with that object; he said, however, that followers of any religion should observe the rules and customs of their religion.

VISITORS

With the increasing number of visitors, many were prompted to seek their livelihood by opening tea and flower shops, and every facility was freely afforded to such people by the colony authorities.

In effect the colony became a small model village. Meherabad differed altogether from the Manzil in Bombay in the matter of visitors. At Bombay visitors were scrupulously avoided, while at Meherabad the contrary rule was observed. There was no restriction upon people of any caste or creed coming to Baba.

The rush of visitors to Meherabad began early, and seems to have happened spontaneously. After only a couple of months of Baba's settling down at Meherabad so many people came to see Baba that at times he could hardly attend to his morning bath. What with all the city people, out-station visitors, and the villagers from the surrounding districts, the encampment looked like a small country fair! Within a few months the number of daily visitors was between two and three hundred! On Sundays, Thursdays, and holidays Meherabad became a place of festival and pilgrimage. The numerous tea, flower, and knick-knack

shops, and scores of other hawkers about the place, lent it additional animation. But for all that, without slackening his other activities, Baba used to meet and talk to and, later, communicate through signs and writing with those visitors who chanced to come across him, irrespective of caste, creed, or social distinctions. Yet by that time the rush was so great that it was practically impossible for all the visitors even to get a look at Baba. Therefore different disciples were specially deputed by Baba to hear what the visitors had to ask. It was found that at least fifty out of a hundred had come to seek blessings for offspring and help in securing employment, etc., and for financial gain—from one whom they believed to be a spiritual personality!

THE SILENCE BEGINS

On June 4, 1925, Baba announced that he would soon remain silent, not speaking at all for a year, and he asked that all should remain attached to him during that time. On the 26th he said that he would not speak to visitors from July 1st, but would confine his speech to the devotees and the colony, giving final instructions before becoming silent for a long period. On July 8th Baba held a meeting of all the disciples, when for about an hour he explained the duties of each during his approaching silence. The next day he summoned the parents and guardians of the boys in the school to gain their co-operation while he remained silent, and to allow their boys to stay at the school. This was the last day on which he was to speak, and in the evening Baba delivered a lecture on the necessity of living for others and of using one's body for the sake of others. He explained the meaning of his silence, which was undertaken partly because of the heavy spiritual working in view of the coming death of Babajan, and partly because

of the disturbances, wars, and disasters which were coming to the world and to India in particular. After these disasters, he said, there would be a period of peace and tranquillity in the world. Baba retired at ten-thirty that night after giving his final instructions. Next morning, Friday, July 10th, Baba left his hut at five o'clock as usual, and greeted everybody by means of signs and by writing on a slate, making inquiries as to health, sleep, food, etc. He was busy as usual during the day looking after the affairs of the school and colony. Thus did the period of silence begin, which was originally for a year but has lasted up till this day.

The number of Mandali increased so much that a new building had to be erected, which was used from September 4th. The arrangement of the new building was such that each one was allotted a separate space in which to sleep and for his belongings. A space in a central position was set aside for Baba's own seat. The "post office" verandah was extended and turned into a general stores. One of the Mandali was appointed as storekeeper. Store requisition forms were printed, and even a piece of soap could not be got without going through the formalities; thus, for disciplinary purposes, a check was placed on the disposal of all kinds of supplies in the colony, including the most necessary articles.

On the 20th of the same month a commodious dharamsala (rest-house) was constructed near the water well to provide shelter for the large number of poor and helpless and many sick persons who had begun to be attracted to Baba from far and near. By the end of the year there were many more such huts and sheds spread over the place, sheltering lepers, male and female destitutes separately, and the families of those serving in the colony in different capacities. The largest of these structures built at the end of the first year was the "Sai

Durbar." It was a hall of corrugated iron about 90 by 40 feet, built near the school premises for visitors and ceremonial occasions. At one end of the hall a stage was erected with a small plain wooden cabin for Baba, with space for one man only to lie down in it.

For the first eight months Baba lived most of the time in the zhopdi (hut) that was built during the earlier period. Another seat was made for him under a neem tree along the main road. On a portion of this seat, or platform, a large wooden table was turned into a small cupboard-like cabin. From October 11th Baba began to retire for the night in the new cabin, and after a few days, i.e. from November 17th, the platform became Baba's central seat both at night and in the day. On the 10th of the same month (November) a dhooni (fireplace) was lighted near the seat at eleven o'clock at night, with due ceremony, by the Mandali under Baba's instructions, and a significant phenomenon was witnessed on that occasion. There was a great scarcity of rain, so that a local famine was certain. Without any previous signs an hour or so after the fire had been lighted it began to rain very heavily. For nearly fifteen hours the rain continued, reviving the dying crops, and a serious famine was averted.

The rush of visitors reached its zenith on Baba's thirty-second birthday. On that day it is reported that no less than twenty thousand people struggled to see Baba from early dawn to midnight, and the chief work on that day for the Mandali was to maintain a cordon round Baba wherever he went, to avoid his being run over by the wild rush of enthusiastic crowds who came for his darshan. No wonder that after that memorable birthday Baba said that "The visitors must now be stopped. Their number has become too great to allow sufficient time to attend to other work." From that

day the visitors began to get less. Within little more than a month the numbers came down from hundreds to a few scores only, and this remained to the end of the period.

On May 3rd Baba repaired to the hill beyond the railway lines, and kept himself in the "tank" premises for seven days at a stretch, aloof from everybody. After that Baba began to come down in the daytime and mixed with the Mandali, but retired for the night over the hill. This was continued for nearly two months, and thus the whole of the Meherabad area was brought into use in one way or the other.

At the start of the silence Baba used to write for hours daily the special "book" which is believed to be the message to the world. It is said that in this work Baba has divulged hitherto unknown spiritual secrets. This writing was done by Baba diligently for about one year and has been kept secret. At times during this period Baba was observed sitting writing in the school at night when all the rest were sleeping. The change of different seats at secluded spots, particularly in the "tank" over the hill, and Baba's remaining aloof for days together, were largely due to this work. His general system was to take a bath early, and then to write from six o'clock in the morning behind closed doors. This and other work used to produce distinct marks of exhaustion. Once he had a severe attack of fever for nearly a week. At times he was massaged with oil, to continue the work in hand immediately after.

SOME DISCIPLES

From the beginning the Mandali was cosmopolitan in its composition. Persons with faiths poles apart, temperaments as wide, and social status no less dissimilar, were included in it. The first European Christian was Lewis Charles Nelhams,

aged about thirty-five, who came from Poona and joined the Mandali on June 20, 1925. He could speak Hindustani and Marathi. On July 23rd he worked as Baba's personal attendant for a day in the absence of one of the regular attendants, and on the 27th of the month he died. He had contracted a slight wound on his leg only a few days before, but in spite of prompt medical treatment the limb became septic. On the 26th Baba was at his bedside, and said that Nelhams would be completely free of all pain by the following morning! None at that time guessed the significance of the remark. The last remains of this first European devotee were given burial in the Christian graveyard at Ahmednagar.

Baba did not take any food or drink that day, but did his normal duties as usual. During the usual after-supper divine discussion that evening Baba was understood to have conveyed, "By dying Nelhams has done away with his gross body, but his mind is still living, and very soon this mind will take another suitable gross medium and again come into contact with me. Those souls who are liberated have their egoistic minds annihilated, while those who take birth again retain their minds, and those souls who after liberation return to normal consciousness have universal minds."

About a month later a Hindu young man of nineteen years of age appeared, who was in a very peculiar state of mind. He heard and understood some words, but besides smiling broadly he could not otherwise express himself. Baba at first glanced at him, led him to the hospital, and arranged for his stay, and asked those in charge to look after him as if he were a patient with an unsound mind. But he added, "He is not mad, but a spiritually advanced person dazed on the path; he is in the third plane." He was given in charge of a member of the Mandali, who was instructed to look after all the young man's daily needs, which he did for years. After some time

this person began to be known as Mustan (the overpowered), by which name he is called to this day.

There was not much change in Mustan afterwards. Physically he became leaner, and mentally he seemed to have gained a very slight addition to his intelligence, being able to understand more words, and at times he tried to talk. To the observer he was a strange automaton. Ask him with signs to clasp his hands, and he kept on doing it until asked to stop! Similarly, if a ball was given to him and he had started playing with it, he went on playing for hours and had to be stopped. Generally he was quiet and inoffensive, but at times he became angry, and then his weak and fragile body seemed charged with energy. Persons four times Mustan's weight found it difficult to keep him in hand. He died on February 12, 1935.

After another month there was one more interesting addition to the Mandali. One evening a Marathi boy of twenty-three years of age named Rama Bhiwa appeared. It transpired that he was a resident of Karanje near Kopargaon, and on his requesting his father to allow him to learn sufficiently to read Rameshwari, he was refused on the plea that he was sufficiently grown up to do the hereditary agricultural work. With this the young man left the parental roof and went on foot to Pandharpur. He was found to have only a few annas and handfuls of baked rice and grain. His clothes were in rags. Baba admitted him forthwith into the colony and renamed him Bholaram. The same evening, after the bhajan, Baba personally taught Bholaram through signs the ABC of Marathi, and declared that "since coming to Arangaon he is the first to get tuition directly from me, and hence, whether he sticks to this place or not, he will make good progress in his education in spite of his age."

SEEKERS AFTER TRUTH

Once a Mahommedan "fakir" from Ajmere came for Baba's "darshan," and pretended great asceticism. Baba asked him to observe a complete fast the following day, perform "Namaz" for the five times, and to repeat 5,001 times the name of Allah. The next day the "fakir" soon found the prayers, fast, and repetition to be foreign to his easy method of getting unearned money and food, and beat a silent retreat.

There was another Sadhu who desired to see God, and for that purpose agreed to stay with Baba and to remain under his instruction for a year, when Baba promised to put him on the path to his goal. But within twenty-four hours the Sadhu began to grumble about one thing and another. Baba conveyed to him that God was not a "cheap fruit" to be had for the asking, but demanded superhuman patience! So the Sadhu went away.

One day an old Hindu man and his wife came to Baba soliciting financial aid to enable them to go to Kashi (Benares), the holy place of pilgrimage. Baba told them that Kashi was there at Meherabad through his presence, and advised them to remain at Meherabad for fifteen days instead. They could not accept what Baba said, so they were given money and sent away.

To another seeker after truth who came to see Baba he gave the usual terms (offered to people who came with lofty ideals but low determination), that of staying for a year in the small hut under the lime trees near the "dhooni," and taking food but once a day, and remaining silent throughout the prescribed period. The man readily accepted the terms, but hardly fifteen minutes had elapsed when Baba asked him through signs what he was thinking about. "I wish I were in

Sherdi," said the man; and so eventually the aspirant was sent away to Sai Baba's shrine at Sherdi.

A yogi-like man speaking broken English came to see Baba and desired divine guidance. Baba advised him to stay at Meherabad, and added the following peculiar sentence to the instructions: "Matla, Ghatla, Ghotla, Vatla, Satla, Chotla, and Potla," which are the necessities for the life of a Sadhu—the begging bowl, water pot, the rod, the long braided hair, and the bundle. This man succeeded with the instructions for nearly ten days, at the end of which he declared himself unwilling to stay any longer. On inquiries it was found that his complaint was about the food. Baba allowed him to go, but remarked through writing "Come for God and gone for bread!"

Together with such people there was always a fair number of true ascetics and aspirants who came to Baba in an unpretentious manner, and with most of them Baba generally "talked" in seclusion. One ascetic on a visit to Baba was reported as having gone to Pandharpur from Ahmednagar rolling all the way in the dust. Once when Gonde-Bua of Khandesh, a well-known ascetic of that district, came to see Baba, he was not allowed an interview. On the contrary, Baba sent him word that "male visitors were not allowed that day," and he went quietly away after hearing the message. Persons of this type were observed to be very humble.

About this time a yogi, who had a large following and lived about fifty miles from Ahmednagar, came to see Baba with the object of testing him. Baba does not usually see people of this sort, nor does he answer their questions; on this occasion, however, he was in the mood to allow the man to be brought to him. The yogi was given a slate on which to write his questions, and while he wrote Baba also wrote on another slate, finishing his writing before the yogi had

completed his. When the yogi's slate was handed to Baba he put it aside without looking at it, and handed his own slate to the yogi: it contained the answers to the questions. The yogi got up, prostrated himself in the Hindu manner, and said "I am sorry."

FASTING AND WORK

Since October the year before, Baba had once again begun to observe fasts. The word fasting is not to be taken in its literal sense, since Baba has been heard to say that he never keeps fasts. That is, he does not stop food though able to eat it. During periods when he does not take food he is unable to eat it. His physical system at such times is not in a position to accept food for various spiritual reasons, though the suffering and weakness caused by abstention is felt as acutely by him as it would be by an ordinary man. A fast was made by Baba with a six days' abstinence from solid food from October 11 to 17, 1925, during which period he took only a few sips of milk or tea or dal soup occasionally. After this six days' fasting Baba began to eat irregularly and scantily.

At times he used to take a few morsels of food after an interval of some hours, or even days, or he would remain only on liquids. Up to March 26, 1926, he was fasting off and on. And even when not fasting he used to take very little food, and that at odd hours. From June 17, 1926, Baba began to observe regular fasts. He used to take one meal every twenty-four hours in the afternoon up to July 11th. Then from July 10th to 22nd, for ten days, he remained on liquids.

From July 23, 1926, for nearly four months Baba remained on one meal a day only. During this period he used to eat and drink in the evening. At first he declared that this fasting programme would be carried to the extreme of stopping all

food for months together, and that at the end of the coming February he would remain even without water. But this, for reasons unknown, was not acted upon.

The reason given by Baba for these prolonged fasts was their connection with the remaining sanskaras of disciples, which become Prarabhda (destiny) when once the connection with a Master is formed.

The food taken by Baba during the intervals between these fasts was little in quantity but rich in quality. It was, of course, strictly vegetarian, but comprised various tasty dishes specially prepared for him. Baba's change of plans with regard to fasting may be noted. For example, on September 1, 1926, he asked the Mandali to prepare his last meal prior to an expected long fast. This was complied with, and for eight days Baba remained on liquids. On September 9th, in the evening, he suddenly declared his willingness to take food provided the Mandali managed to prepare certain dishes within seventeen minutes! There was a wild rush among the members to fulfil this desire; some had to go begging in the village for certain ingredients, and they succeeded in getting ready the required dishes in the short time at their disposal. Baba took a few morsels of the food, but he neither began his long fast nor took to normal eating, but continued taking one meal a day.

Again on October 19th the Mandali had to provide the supposed last meal to Baba, which, however, did not prove to be such. On this occasion sufficient time was allowed. The meal was taken by all sitting in the Sai Durbar, Baba personally serving the Mandali. Baba himself took a little of this food, but it was not, as expected, the last meal prior to the continuous long fast under contemplation.

Almost until the day he left Meherabad, Baba kept fasting or eating very irregularly. On the last week of the stay he remained on water for some days.

Baba's bathing of untouchable boys has already been mentioned. Throughout the two years, twice, thrice, and sometimes four times a week, Baba used to bathe all the schoolboys including the untouchables with his own hands. In the first month, when the number of boys was only thirty or forty, he did this work single-handed, and was three or four hours at it. Even after allowing the Mandali to join him in this duty when the numbers increased, Baba continued to work himself. From July 4, 1925, Baba began to grind grain for an hour or so daily. At times, in addition to a certain fixed quantity, Baba also used to make up the deficit in the daily requirement of the flour in the colony by sitting at the grinder alone or with one or two of the Mandali.

For the last six months of the stay Baba made it a rule to wash with his own hands the dirty clothes of five boys of the school every day, which at times included also the untouchables.

In addition to these labours, Baba frequently took part in other tasks with the Mendali. When the work of fitting a new mechanical water-lifter over the well was begun those working at it were instructed by Baba to finish it that very evening, in contrast to their usual dilatory way of going about things; which, as one of them explained to me, was not that they were slack in performing their duties, but because Baba wished the work hurried on. "Either get the new arrangement working to-day or throw it away for good" were his stern orders. This stimulant had its effect, and, after strenuous labour, the party managed to bring the lifter into action by nine o'clock that night. In the same way the mason was also advised that day to finish the refixing of the old lifter in a new position, but instead of working extra hours he slipped away to Nagar at his usual time, leaving the work unfinished.

When Baba came to know about it he called some of the Mandali, and with their help completed the mason's work himself.

Once when the school director was absent from duty because of ill-health Baba took charge of his post and looked after the boys' clothing, feeding, studies, and so on throughout the day.

At the end of every month the wages to be paid to labourers and other workers were generally distributed by the Mandali in Baba's presence, when he used to impress upon them with signs and writings to be careful, hard-working, and honest in their duties. It should be noted here that Baba has not touched money since the period of silence started.

With all his fastings and work, Baba freely took part in all sorts of games and sports either with the boys or the Mandali.

UPLIFTMENT OF DEPRESSED CLASSES

Just as the boys were attracted towards Baba, their parents and guardians were never left alone. Baba's dynamic activity was directed to improving their lot too. Villagers of all castes always received attention from Baba for their moral, religious, and social benefit, and those belonging to the untouchable castes came in for his special consideration. When Baba found that some of the untouchable boys' parents were in very poor condition he promised a monthly supply of food.

A dispute arose between one of the villagers and an old widow, and Baba made up her debt of 50 rupees to the talati (head of the village) and got back the possession of her land from him. Besides, she was given 15 rupees for her maintenance. On another occasion, when Baba came to hear of a quarrel having taken place among the villagers, the parties

concerned were summoned before him. It transpired that, on account of money transactions, a Mahar had assaulted a woman whose husband was the former's debtor for 20 rupees. The aggressor was caused to be slapped by order of Baba for the assault, while the woman was ordered to make good the debt of 20 rupees by three monthly instalments of 7 rupees each. A certain Mahar family was provided with expenses to Bombay and a recommendatory letter to a Bombay devotee to provide them with occupation.

When Baba and about sixteen members of the Mandali were invited for dinner at the village police "patel's" house, covers for the untouchables and non-Hindus were laid outside and for Baba and the rest inside the house. But Baba dined with the former outside the house. After the dinner the village Mahars (untouchables) requested Baba to visit their dharamsala. Baba not only complied with this, but also visited each Mahar house in the village!

On another occasion, when the Mahars invited Baba and the Mandali to tea in the village, he and the non-Maratha Mandali took tea with the untouchables, although separate arrangements were ready. This time Baba and party were conducted in an enthusiastic procession headed by a wild medley of village music.

One evening two goats were run over by a passing goods train near the colony. Baba at once sent someone from the Mandali to find them. One was dead and the other in a badly injured condition. Baba instructed the latter to be removed immediately to the hospital and attended to. After some time the goat crushed to death was reported to have been taken away by some village Mahars, apparently to make a feast of it. As soon as Baba came to know of this he set out after the Mahars and overtook them at their doors with the booty in their possession. Not only were they made to throw away

the carcase, but Baba made them take oaths not to eat such things again under any circumstances. These Mahars were then brought to Meherabad and fed to the full.

While sitting one day at the school premises looking after the progress of both the teachers and the taught, Baba got from the untouchable boys the information that in spite of six months' teaching and advice they were occasionally taking meat at home. Baba seemed very displeased at this discovery, and immediately instructed the school authorities to stop giving boys who were eating meat and eggs at home the daily food at Meherabad. These boys were informed that thereafter they would get nothing more than clothes and books, and they were also forbidden to participate in bhajan and his darshan. This was acted upon to the letter. After a couple of days Baba inquired of the boys concerned what they had had for food the previous evening and that morning. The majority declared they had had chutney and bread, while a few admitted having still had dried fish and eggs. Baba said that he was about to cancel the prohibition order, but now he felt checked at the impunity of some of the boys. "I am trying to raise these people's standard of morality and general living," conveyed Baba to those around him, adding, "Excepting those who had had forbidden food, all should be given the usual food both times every day."

This had its effect. In the afternoon the parents and guardians of the boys came before Baba and begged his pardon. The pardon was granted, but only after all had taken oaths with their hands on their throats that thereafter they would neither cook nor eat in their houses eggs, fish, or other kinds of meat.

One day it was reported that some of the Arangaon Mahars had brought in a dead bullock to the Maharwada and made a feast over it that morning. First of all Baba made sure that

none of those who had sworn before him had participated in the affair; he then went into the village and took down the names of those who had been at the feast. This made the villagers very uneasy, and the next morning they trooped in before Baba and promised that in future they would bury dead animals instead of eating them. Baba promised them five rupees for every corpse and compensation for the skin of the dead animals, which the Mahars usually sold. This undertaking on the part of the Mahars led other villagers to work against them! The astute amongst the latter no doubt saw in this undertaking that the so-called untouchables would no longer remain under their thumbs, so that within a month Baba learned one evening that a mass meeting had been held where all the village Mahars were brought together, and some of the higher-caste villagers had tried to induce the untouchables to resume their dead-animal dealing.

The ringleaders were persuaded not to continue such propaganda, and one of them was brought before Baba, who told him that the intention was to improve the lot of the depressed among them. They were threatened by Baba with punishment if they persisted. The following morning a large number of the villagers of all castes was summoned before Baba and severely taken to task. Baba informed them that it was he who had advised the Mahars to have nothing to do with dead animals, but to bury them, and hence those who were in need of the skins of the dead animals should come to him instead of troubling the poor Mahars, when they were promised two rupees in lieu of the skins which were buried. A few days later the village Mahars were called again before Baba, who lectured them on abstaining from stealing, flesh-eating, and dead-animal dealing.

Shortly after, when a goat was reported to have died in the village, Baba went personally to see that it was duly

buried and not devoured by the Mahars. When a Mahar was reported to have assaulted a female member of his own family Baba took him severely to task and asked him never in future to use violence towards womenfolk, and as a punishment asked him to observe a fast.

Again, a man named Ganoo Kalapur of the village was reported to have beaten his wife. He was rebuked by Baba for this, and as a punishment he was asked to promise in writing that in future he would not be violent with her under pain of whatever punishment Baba might think fit to impose on him. The bond was duly executed, and the pair went home in peace.

At the end of the first year, when drill was introduced among the schoolboys, the Mahars in their ignorance got it into their heads that their children were being prepared to be sent away to war! Consequently, a number of parents and guardians appeared before Baba on April 3, 1926, requesting that their children be sent home for the night. It did not take long for Baba to convince them of the hollowness of their fears, so that they were satisfied and asked for the boys to remain with Baba as usual. But now he insisted on their removal, as he "said," in spite of all that he had done for their good, how could they entertain such doubts of his intentions? The matter was discussed for the whole day. The villagers again and again prayed to be pardoned. Baba at last granted them pardon on condition that those who had had the "fears" should keep a fast for three days. This was agreed to, and on the third day of the fast Baba went to the village and brought those who were fasting to the colony and got them served with milk and jowari bread. On the day following this, in commemoration of the occasion, the whole village was entertained to a dinner.

But the Arangaon villagers were not the only people who attracted Baba's attention. In fact, people from all parts of the country, who came across Baba during this period, received consideration in one way or another. I quote a few instances.

At about eight o'clock one night a villager came to Baba in a terrified state, saying that he was one of the many people who was bitten by a mad dog that evening at Walki (a village about five miles from Arangaon, where a bazaar is held every Monday). Baba led the victim to the hospital, and saw that the doctor did all that was possible under the circumstances to render him comfortable. Then Baba arranged for the man to be sent to Ahmednagar for further treatment. He even cancelled his programme of going to Bombay the following day, and instead of that sent Rustomji in search of other probable victims of the dog-bite in the village.

One evening, when the bhajan party of Malegaon came for his darshan and entertained those present with their devotional recitations, Baba encouraged them and "asked" them to come to Meherabad as often as possible to recite their bhajans, as he "said" he liked such bhajans very much.

Two wayfarers were among the visitors one day. They belonged to Sind, Hyderabad. They were on pilgrimage, and had been to Kashi. From the latter place they had journeyed on foot for three months. They were brothers; the younger was not keeping well, hence they wanted to return to their native place by rail, but were short of funds. Baba promised them help, and asked them first to take food. Respecting their religious sentiments, they were allowed to cook for themselves after providing them with all the necessary materials. When they were refreshed Baba sent them to the station with one of the Mandali and got them tickets to Hyderabad!

Once after the evening bhajan Baba asked the Mandali to

press and massage his hands and feet. About fifteen of the strongest began to do so. They were asked to exert more and more strength and press as much as they could. This went on for nearly twenty minutes, causing the massaging party to be drenched with perspiration, while Baba kept on smiling, looking as if he enjoyed the onslaught of about fifteen pairs of sinewy hands on his comparatively fragile body.

At the end of October the previous year there was a visit from Gangaram, who was the Mandali's barber during their stay in the Manzil in Bombay. Baba, who had for some reason remained unshaven for the previous nine months, got himself shaved that afternoon by this old barber.

Similarly, between the months of May and June 1926, during his stay over the hill, Baba again remained unshaven for nearly two months, contrary to his usual custom.

On one occasion it was rumoured that Baba had died, and a great crowd of people gathered together. Then Baba declared with signs that for a long time he would not leave his body, although he would not retain his physical connection with the world after ninety years at the most!

At this time Satyr Mang, who was a robber and a terror to the district, came to Baba for his blessing, for robbers do not neglect to pay respect to holy men. Baba received him, and called him a coward and told him to wear bangles like a woman. This disturbed the man, and he asked Baba what he should do. Baba told him to promise not to rob any more from that day. The man promised, and Baba said that he would tell the people of the villages to maintain him. The man kept his promise for a few months, then he started to rob again; but when he was about to lay his hands on his

booty he saw the figure of Baba, so he ran away and went to Baba for pardon.

One night robbers came in Baba's absence and took away the galvanized iron on Baba's cabin, and when this was reported to Baba he sent for Satyr Mang, who denied that he had done it; but Baba said that some of his men were responsible, and told him to find their leader. Satyr Mang then brought Fakira Mang to Baba, and before the sacred fire (dhooni), which was always kept burning, the two men took ashes in their palms and made an oath in the name of Baba that he who had committed the robbery would die. Fakira took the matter lightly, so the story goes, but in eight days he was dead.

BABA'S ELDER BROTHER DIES

On February 27, 1926, after having had his bath and made inquiry after the Mandali and his usual round of inspections, Baba was given the post at about twelve o'clock. A telegram from his father was found to convey the news of the sudden death of Baba's elder brother, Jamshedji. Baba immediately sent for all the Mandali, and when all had assembled the telegram was read to them. Jamshedji, who had been a healthy, cheerful man of thirty-five, had been much liked, and all were greatly pained. He had been present on Baba's birthday celebration, and his mother, contrary to Baba's wishes, wanted him to go to Poona; but Jamshedji went. Baba seemed unconcerned at the news of his brother's death. He showed not even the faintest signs of grief or emotion. On the contrary, when he "spoke" on the subject he discussed it in a matter-of-fact "tone" and in the vein of occasional explanations and discourses upon divine subjects. First of all, Baba remarked that in spite of his repeated advice to the contrary,

Jamshedji persisted in going away from Meherabad, and now, he said, he is really gone! Then the Mandali were asked if they felt any grief, and, all replying in the affirmative, Baba said their grief was false, hypocrisy, and selfishness. At this someone said: "But from a worldly point of view, everyone must feel it." "But why?" replied Baba. "That is where the mistake is made. It is all false." "Was he not your brother? Is he not dead?" persisted another, to whom Baba replied, "He was indeed my brother, but he is not dead. On the contrary, he is resting within myself." "But how," asked a third member of the Mandali, "are we to know and appreciate that?" "From believing those who know the secrets of life and death," concluded Baba.

Answering many more such questions, Baba dwelt at length on "Death and the Cry Over It," the gist of which is reproduced:

Death is common to all. It is a necessary step forward towards life. The soul merely changes into a new abode, and thus death means nothing more than changing your coat. Or it may be compared with sleep. The difference between death and sleep is that, after the first, one wakes up again in a new body, while in the latter one becomes conscious of the same body. Worldly people do not go into hysterics after one who goes to sleep at night, simply because they expect to see him awake again. Then why not exercise the same indifference when he sleeps the sleep of death, since he *is bound* to wake up again sooner or later in a new body? Thus the selfishness of not being able to satisfy their minds in the absence of the *sight* of their dear ones makes them weep and wail, and not so much the death itself.

After the death of a person, a hue and cry is raised from all sides. "*My* beloved father is dead." "The source of *my* life is gone," "The light of *my* eye is dimmed," "Where is *my* sweetheart?" "*My* supporter has disappeared," and such exclamations are heard in the house of death. But in spite of a great display of grief and

pain, the "*my and mine*" remain uppermost rather than consideration of the welfare of the one who has actually passed away.

The sword of death has been freely swinging right and left since the beginning of man's history. Every day I *see* hundreds and thousands of my brothers dying without feeling anything for it, and Jamshedji's death is no exception to that. All admit that death is the unavoidable end, and though the fact is universally acknowledged and experienced, yet at the time of its happening people start crying. It is either madness or weakness of mind! But Jamshedji is not dead. If he is really dead all should rejoice over it, since it means *Real Life*! Although you find me moving about amongst you, playing with you and in fact doing all that a supposed living man does, *I am really dead*!

I am living because I am dead! *Die all of you in the real sense so that you may live ever after!*

After this "lecture" Baba selected a party to go to Poona to condole with the family according to the way of the world; and after their departure he performed his daily duties as unconcernedly as ever, and instructed all to attend to their own duties. The usual sports were also gone through, with the addition of a tea-party with sweets in the evening; all this being an example of how to behave under such circumstances and how to take death at its true worth.

During this period reports from Baba's devotees at Poona and Sakori showed how Babajan and Maharaj remembered him in touching words. Babajan was also frequently reported to be resting her head on Baba's photo and shedding tears of love. While at times visitors from Sakori said they were sent to Meherabad by Upasni Maharaj, who told them, "What is here? Go to Merwan." Similarly, many visitors came to Baba under Narayan Maharaj's personal direction, which showed that he too constantly remembered Meher Baba. When Mr. Angal, pleader of Ahmednagar, had been to see Narayan

Maharaj in May 1926 he casually remarked in Maharaj's presence that he went to Meher Baba occasionally, upon which Narayan Maharaj told him, "*I and he are one.* You see me while serving him. He is a Sat-Purush. He has been to me in the past."

Once when Baba had gone for a walk a serpent was found near the women's quarters in his absence and was killed. Upon his return the body of the reptile was shown to him, and the one who did so lifted it up in his hand; Baba immediately asked him through signs to drop it and to wash his hands twenty-four times!

FOOD AND FASTS

From January 25, 1925, the Mandali's food consisted of simply cooked dal (lentils) and rice twice a day for four months. Then for about ten months they had dal and rice for dinner and potato and jowari bread for supper. For another four months, between April 1st and July 27, 1926, milk and milk tea and jowari bread for supper, and dal and rice for dinner. The richest breakfast meant milk, tea, and plain bread, but after May 21, 1926, the milk was abolished in favour of weak, milkless tea. For four months from August 5, 1926, there was milkless tea and jowari bread in the morning for breakfast and the same for supper. The dal and rice for dinner were ordered to be prepared spiceless.

From October 17, 1925, for about four months, some of the Mandali had to keep fasts every Sunday for twenty-four hours, while the whole Mandali did so every Thursday during that period. Besides these weekly fasts, a few had to remain completely on a few cups of milk. From June 19, 1926, the system of one of the Mandali remaining on fast for nine-

teen hours with Baba every day by turns was the rule up to nearly the end of the stay.

There were occasional twenty-four-hour fasts for all on some important days, such as the death of Hazrat Tajuddin of Nagpur, Baba's silence anniversary, and so on.

THE DISCIPLES' DUTIES

All were made to work to the utmost according to their capabilities. There was comparatively little work done by paid labour. As far as possible, Baba saw that the Mandali members did every kind of work. Hard labour and easy work they were made to carry out to the letter and spirit of the order, performing the service of humanity in its true meaning. They were not only to serve the poor and destitute, but they were brought to the same level as those they served in the matter of living and food; thus the Mandali could fully appreciate the needs and feelings of those served. The work was not to be done haphazardly, but with the greatest promptitude, enthusiasm, and exactness in every detail.

Every now and then the Mandali were specially exhorted by Baba to be attentive and alive to their respective duties. The following is a summary of what was on one such occasion conveyed to the Mandali by Baba through signs, gestures, and writings:

Without making the Circle[1] settled, I am not going to leave Meherabad. But do not compel me to do so earlier through inattention to my instructions. I ask you all not to leave me till I speak. Even if I seem to scold you or show displeasure and disgust, don't leave your duties under any circumstances. Beware of lustful thoughts and actions and impulses of temper and anger. Follow

[1] For a discussion as to the meaning of the Circle, see Part III.

my words; it is for your own good. The contact of a Saint, the service of humanity, and the repetition of God's name, these three combined are the highest possible yogas and religious practices! If this much is done, *all the religions* are observed completely. While serving the sufferers and disabled people in the dharamsala and hospital, consider every one of them to be *myself*! Serve them heartily and you will be serving me thereby. . . .

He fixed the routine of the duties of compounder, nurse, sweeper, watchman, cook, manager, storekeeper, accountant, teacher, reporter, writer, singer, water-carrier, and what not; some had to play the part of barber and trim the hair of the school children. Then there was the boys' bathing, and daily grinding of corn with Baba.

Sometimes the hospital patients were given warm baths by the Mandali. From July 4, 1925, to July 7, 1926, for one year, most of the Mandali had to do a certain amount of hard grinding work over and above their normal duties every morning for some hours. For the first four or five months, until paid washermen were engaged, some of the Mandali had the daily task of washing the dirty clothes of the thirty or forty boys in the school, including those belonging to the untouchables.

These extra duties also included the occasional cow-dung spreading over the grounds of the different premises wherever there was no Shahabad stone flooring. The place came in for regular overhauling every Thursday in this connection. On these days it was the rule for all the inmates to get out their belongings and then lend a hand in the spreading work. New well-digging also provided some hard work. One day, owing to a misunderstanding, some of the Mandali were without work and idled away the time. When this was noticed by Baba he prepared a list of work to be done:

1. The ground around the school to be made level.

2. Cow-dung to be spread in the whole of the mandap.
3. Bathe the hospital patients with hot water.
4. Wash the whole of the hospital and dispensary floors.

A letter from one of the out-station Mandali to Baba was once read before all. The writer said therein that so long as Baba did not forgive him for his faults he had decided to leave off eating, thus observing a fast, and added that now he was not in a hurry to receive the pardon for which he had so frequently but unsuccessfully written to Baba. Baba at once instructed someone from the Mandali to send a telegraphic pardon and an order to break the fast!

By the end of the first year a regular committee was formed in connection with the management of the domestic affairs of the steadily growing colony, and Baba granted privileges and powers to the office-bearers. The name Circle Committee was given to this new local self-government of Meherabad. A chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, sixteen members, and two peons were duly elected from amongst the Mandali by themselves. After that to the end of the stay the Circle Committee regularly met and conducted useful work.

Baba made it a rule to hear five pages of the Bible read every day for some months, thus affording one of his Indian Christian devotees an interesting time, as Baba would explain to him the significance of what he read, while others listened.

NOTABLE EVENTS

One evening in the month of August 1925 a heavy shower of rain fell during bhajan. Baba suddenly inquired with signs where Behramji was, and why he did not come for bhajan. Then, under the excuse of looking for Behramji, Baba went out in the heavy rain without an umbrella. For some time he

continued to run here and there in the rain apparently in search of Behramji, but his movements were very peculiar. By the time he returned to the bhajan mandap with Behramji, whom he found taking shelter under a tree, both were drenched from head to foot. They had a change of linen, after which Baba gave some quinine pills to Behramji, and covered himself up with Rustamji's overcoat—Rustamji at that time was supposed to have gone out of Ahmednagar in a motor truck. Without there being any reference made by anyone, Baba suddenly conveyed by signs to Mother Gulmai, who was sitting near, that Rustamji had fallen. Then quickly changing the subject, Baba became attentive to the bhajan, and none paid serious attention to the remark. However, the following evening, when Rustamji came back to Meherabad, Baba's remark the previous evening gained significance from the former's description of how he narrowly escaped death at the same moment.

According to Rustamji, while he was returning to Ahmednagar in his lorry on the evening in question, they encountered a heavy rainfall on the way. The lorry was driven on despite the rain. By sunset they came upon a road crossing a small river which seemed to be in flood. Thinking the flow of the water to be shallow, Rustamji drove the lorry full speed ahead in an attempt to take the stream quickly. But in the midway the car stuck in a hole full of sand and stopped, and the lorry with a full load of passengers threatened to be washed away with the stream.

At this Rustamji got down in the water to ascertain the exact depth. Only after getting down from the car did he get an idea of the force of the river. But it was too late. He felt himself losing balance and being caught in the stream, and would have been lost in the dark had not his hands come upon one of the mudguards. Catching hold firmly, Rustamji

cried for help and was taken up by some of the passengers. After some time help arrived, and all were moved into another conveyance, the lorry remaining there the whole night. The time that Baba was running here and there in the heavy downpour was said to be exactly the time that Rustamji came near death and when the words "Rustamji has fallen" were uttered.

An unusual outburst of feeling was witnessed in a devotee named Waman Subnis one night. Through some accidental circumstances he could not get the prasad (a gift from a Master, which is highly valued and considered sacred) that Baba distributed among the Mandali the same afternoon. Again, in the evening, when all paid their usual respects to Baba before retiring for the night, Waman could not do so. Also at bhajan-time the same evening Baba looked at him in a peculiar way. At ten o'clock Waman suddenly went into wild hysterics. He began to repeat loudly, "Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj-ki Jai!" (Hail! Shri Meher Baba, the Perfect Master!) and the single words, "Baba, Baba." He also began to slap himself violently. Naturally, many ran to him and tried to pacify him, but he brushed them aside and continued shouting and slapping himself. All the while he was muttering about his having been deprived of Baba's darshan and prasad. In spite of the Mandali's efforts to pacify him, he continued to remain in a kind of delirium for nearly two hours. It was midnight when he as suddenly became himself again.

Once while Baba and a party of fourteen members were going to Rahuri in a motor truck to attend a marriage function at a devotee's place, Baba asked the car to be stopped near the village of Dehre, and told Arjun to go and beg for food at the village. The latter did as he was bid, but could not succeed in getting any alms. However, a poor Indian Christian offered to provide food, and actually brought some dal and

rice to the motor lorry. Baba partook of a few handfuls and returned the remainder to the man. Then the party approached a local Marwari's shop, who offered some pickle to Baba, who accepted it and distributed it to the Mandali with the bread already with them. Only after the supper was finished did the journey proceed.

On another occasion, when Baba and party had been to the village of Walki for a day out, the Mandali was again instructed to do some begging. Baba and a few remained seated under a tree at the outskirts of the village, while the rest of the party divided into groups and entered the village by various entrances.

The usually quiet village of Walki was amazed to see so many queer beggars in decent dress let loose upon it. Some gave food; some, taking it to be a joke, asked the amateur beggars to clear out, and a few went to the length of abusing and taunting them. However, the party collected as much as they required and returned to Baba. The different kinds of food were made into one mixture by Baba, and then distributed by him. But very soon the identity of the beggars and the fact that Baba was present spread in the village, and a large number of the residents began to run out for his darshan. Those who had refused alms showed great regret, and some cursed themselves for the lost opportunity of serving the deva (god) who came to their doors, and persisted in bringing fresh food.

In the month of September 1926 for some days it was made a rule for some of the Mandali to deliver lectures and sing kirtans (hymns) on religious and spiritual subjects by turns every night after supper. It proved very popular, as it was found both amusing and instructive.

In the beginning of the same year the Mandali had a success in preparing the well-known play, *Shah Shivaji*, thereby

entertaining the colony and providing a treat for many of the surrounding villagers who flocked to see the drama. It was not a haphazard performance, but those of the Mandali who took part worked at their parts for days beforehand, and there were frequent rehearsals. Baba took a keen interest in the affair and encouraged those who worked at it.

CASTE RESTRICTIONS

From the time of the formation of the Mandali, although all were treated equally by Baba, irrespective of religion and caste, and all mixed freely together, yet in the matter of food Baba at first respected the Hindu members' susceptibilities. The latter always cooked for themselves and had their meals separately.

Once a controversy was raised amongst the Mandali whether to do away even with this food restriction. The non-Hindus vigorously pressed for its abolition, and the Hindus with equal force insisted upon its retention. For days together hot discussion took place, Baba looking on biding his time. In the end Baba, finding the Hindus sensitive on the point, supported them, and the matter was dropped. Eventually he brought about what he wished in his own way. During the last months at Meherabad, when all paid labour was dispensed with, the question of separate cooking was again raised. Baba suggested that the Hindus should go on with their separate arrangements, but that they must do the work themselves; this the Hindus hesitated to do, and were found to favour a common kitchen.

On close questioning it was found that they merely feared public opinion not only for themselves but for Baba, as people might think badly of him were his Hindu Mandali not to observe a principal condition of their religion!

When Baba learned of this he "said": "You people, become anxious for me when I appoint you Kajiji [a Paul Pry]; not before!" and permitted the restrictions to be abolished from that time. So from November 5, 1926, all the Mandali, Hindus, and non-Hindus took their food together. From that date also there were no restrictions about cooks, and non-Hindus were appointed to the kitchen.

A SUDDEN DECISION

In October, however, the prospect of the Meherabad colony coming to an end appeared. A special meeting of the Mandali was called by Baba, who seriously put to the members the question of winding up all affairs, and later on the decision to do so was come to. The hospital and other inmates were informed to prepare for the place closing down. The paid staff was given notice. The parents and guardians of the boys were sent word to arrange for their removal, unless they were willing to leave their boys unconditionally in Baba's charge. For the rest of the Mandali a visit to Persia with Baba was the intention, and preliminary arrangements were made for that visit.

As will be seen, Baba went away for ten days to Lonavla and for three weeks to Bombay, and then came back to Meherabad and resettled there! But in November nothing of the sort was guessed at. The Meherabad stay was brought to an end in November, and everything connected with it was dissolved. Many were the reasons given by Baba for this abrupt conclusion. He "said" that when one has to erect a big building a temporary scaffolding is raised up, and when the building is completed the scaffolding is removed. "The School, Hospital, etc., were but scaffoldings for my real working. What have I to do with works which are done by

municipalities? Hence, when my work is finished, I have no need of scaffoldings."

The coincidence of the sudden deaths of Arjun, the head of the school, and Dr. Karkal, the head of the hospital, within a month of the wind-up, sheds a peculiar light on the event. None of the residents at the colony was thrown adrift as a result of the upheaval. At first many among the Mandali felt the prospect of many helpless and homeless people, as many as four hundred, being left to their fate; but it was found that Baba had considered everyone and had provided suitable relief where it was required.

Save the original premises, the post office and the mess quarters, and Baba's zhopdi, all the structures were brought to the ground within a week by the Mandali by Baba's express command.

On November 25th Baba and his party left Meherabad for Lonavla by motor lorries, leaving the Arangaon encampment desolate and silent.

The party with Baba arrived at Lonavla and stayed at a bungalow near Walwan. Baba prepared new rules for their stay. He also told them, referring to his "book," that during his seclusion at Meherabad he had written a great many pages of notes which would afterwards be expanded into volumes. At one of the meetings before Meherabad was vacated Baba had said in the course of a discourse "spoken" on the alphabet board:

There is no importance in worldly affairs; for a Realized One the world is less important than a dream. A poetic genius such as Shakespeare had not even the shadow of true existence and bliss. The real state of God is that of sound sleep, to attain to God Realization means to enjoy that sleep while remaining fully conscious at the same time. This state cannot be described and can hardly be told of. Hafiz says: "This world is nothing plus nothing."

On December 5th the bungalow was vacated and the party went by train to Bombay, where they stayed at Santa Cruz. Here news was received that great crowds were visiting Babajan, and that she, who had for years not moved from her seat under the tree, was taking drives around the city and spending much time sitting near the Bund gardens. Baba remarked that these were signs that she was near to leaving her gross body.

THE RETURN TO MEHERABAD

Many people came to visit Baba at Santa Cruz. Arjun, who had been head of the school, died at Lonavla on December 22nd. Baba said: "It was good that he died. Two or three days prior to his end he was seeing me in my true form, and now he is with me." The next day Baba surprised everyone by saying that he proposed to return to Meherabad. This was the last place to which any of his company expected him to go after its complete demolition only a month earlier. On December 24th the stay at Bombay came to an end and the party left by train for Ahmednagar, arriving at Meherabad on the morning of the 25th. The first news they received was that Dr. Karkal, who had set up in practice at Ahmednagar, had died that day of pneumonia.

NO MORE WRITING

By December 31st a school for the village boys had been reopened at a bungalow on the outskirts of the village. There were forty pupils, some of the older boys being sent to schools at Ahmednagar at Baba's expense. On January 1, 1927, Baba said that he would cease to write as well as to speak, and added that when his writing or speaking would be resumed

was not certain. The next day, January 2nd, the period of non-writing started, and Baba began to use an alphabet board to convey what he had to say. He took no food that day.

Baba "spoke" regularly in the evenings on spiritual matters. He impressed upon them all to meditate daily upon God with heart and soul.

Think of one thing only—God—and remain in a fixed position throughout the meditation, without change. Let the name of the Lord alone be on your lips. If your mind begins to wander, don't stop trying to concentrate upon Him. Strive to reach the aim, and you will see me in my true form and experience many spiritual blessings.

One day Baba said that it was Sai Baba who controlled the Great War,[1] though he seemed to be doing nothing, sitting in an out-of-the-way place, Sherdi, near Sakori—in the same Ahmednagar district—unknown to the world at large. There was a long discussion among the members of the Mandali about the war in China and the sending of Indian troops there. Baba said that if the hostilities in China did not soon come to an end, the British people would be the greatest sufferers.

Thursdays were set aside for visitors as before, and large numbers came bringing food and sweets to Baba. One day there came a yogi from the village of Rahuri who attracted much attention. He was said to be three hundred years old; others said that he had been living for fourteen hundred years, changing his body whenever necessary through his yogic powers. What was known for certain was that he was well known in the district as an ascetic. He remained for long periods without food and water, and according to his own statements lived "on air." He demonstrated to the Mandali

[1] The war was a spiritual upheaval: spiritual values are directed by those who have spiritual consciousness.

his control over breathing. He seemed to have no other aim but to serve animals, and to all visitors who came to see him he offered food prepared by himself. He lived upon gifts and collections, and Baba presented him with twenty rupees. Yogic powers are, however, no proof of spiritual advancement.

On January 28th Babajan's birthday was celebrated. It was characteristic, however, that those in charge of the school forgot to tell the boys of the holiday, so that the boys came in the morning and school was started as usual. When the mistake was realized the classes were stopped and a holiday declared. The day was, however, very quiet and there was no one present but the members of the Mandali. The prayers were recited, the cradle swung, the flowers distributed, but there was no festival atmosphere. Baba was displeased at the negligence of the Mandali in forgetting the birthday of Babajan, for it meant that they had respect only for Baba. At eight o'clock, however, he started them singing, playing the gramophone, indoor games, and other entertainments, and he distributed sweetmeats, so that the day ended better than it had begun.

From February 1st to the 6th Baba kept a complete fast, taking food only on the sixth day. During this time he remained shut up for hours in his hut and went for solitary walks. The erection of a new building in which to reopen a boarding school was debated among the Mandali; Baba insisted that the staff must be unpaid, being provided only with food, housing, and clothing. He said that his object in establishing the school would be to start the boys on a spiritual way of life, to give them the benefit of close contact with himself, and to mould their characters in an ideal form. He therefore wanted teachers whose one aim was to serve his spiritual ends, and to pay them, he said, would nullify their

service from a spiritual point of view. Service for money was not spiritual service, he said. This wish of Baba's was, however, argued about by the Mandali, it being thought that good teaching could not be got in such a way; and Baba appeared to acquiesce in their viewpoint. A few days later, however, Baba said that the building of the new school must not be proceeded with.

One day in February a party of Indian Christians paid a visit to Baba to enlist his sympathy and help in opening a new missionary college at Ahmednagar. After some talk Baba abruptly asked them if they were Christians. Of course they were, was the reply. "What was the command of Jesus?" asked he. "Was it not to leave all and follow him?" To this the visitors assented. "Have you done that?" asked Baba. "Have you given up lust and greed?" At this the visitors appeared uncomfortable, though obviously impressed by Baba's words. They then left, asking him to visit them at their institution in the city.

A few days before his birthday Baba instructed one of the company to collect together from the neighbouring villages one hundred and fifty diseased and disabled persons, particularly those suffering from skin complaints, for him to bathe, clothe, and feed on that day. When he was told that it might not be possible to find one hundred and fifty such people in the time he agreed that the number could be made up with poor boys. On February 18th Baba's thirty-third birthday was celebrated. The camp was gaily decorated, and Baba himself served the Mandali with a special breakfast at six o'clock of rava (a sweet dish) and tea with milk. Visitors began to appear at seven. Baba's ceremonial bath was at nine o'clock, and an hour later there was a spiritual discourse by one of the devotees.

At the end of the discourse the cradle ceremony took

place: a small decorated cradle containing the portraits of Baba, Babajan, and Upasni Maharaj was swung in turn by all present, while a special prayer was sung and flowers were thrown on the cradle. Baba then took his seat under a tree by the roadside and distributed rava and sweetmeats to the boys and girls of the school. After the meal at midday there was singing and other music, and late in the afternoon a special singer from Bombay entertained the company. At five-thirty there was a palanquin procession; but Baba refused to sit in the palanquin and walked beside it, his photograph being put inside. The procession went out of the camp and proceeded up a hill; there, on a specially prepared seat, Baba sat down, and the ladies recited a special prayer. The ladies then returned to their own quarters, and the rest of the company with Baba indulged in games and bhajan. On the return Baba was asked to take his seat in the palanquin, and the procession went on with cheers, another prayer being recited on arrival at the camp. Then followed supper, and at nine-thirty all retired for the night.

MORE DISCOURSES

The day after Baba said that he would speak within five days.[1] He sent for all the Mandali, and asked them which was the largest gaol in India. Some thought Ahmedabad, others at Poona, others at Bombay, others elsewhere. Baba smiled, and said the largest gaol on earth was their bodies.

On another occasion, in March, Baba gave a discourse on the value of repeating God's name verbally. These discourses were made, of course, by means of the alphabet board. Baba did not, in fact, break his silence as on February 19th he said

[1] Such remarks from Baba are not to be taken literally: five days in his sense is another matter from what it is normally.

he would. Baba enjoined upon all to repeat God's name regularly and conscientiously.

Concentrate your mind on the repetition alone, and breathe regularly while doing so. Inhale and exhale the breath slowly and repeat the name of God as you breathe. Let other thoughts come—they will come—but always strive to drive them away,[1] but keep the mind cool and steady. Once you have gained a liking for this exercise, you will never drop it but find a secret pleasure in the duty.

At the end of the month Baba spoke on life after death. He said:

What the astral body of an ordinary man sees and experiences after death, the yogis see and experience during physical life—while having their gross bodies. Four days after death the astral body rises up to gain pleasure or pain according to its good or bad actions in physical life. When the store of virtue (Poonya) and vice (Paap) is exhausted, the soul, in accordance with the faint impress of the sanskaras, takes another gross body, that is, is reborn in the physical world, which process goes on until the soul is freed from the chains of birth and death.

Rarely, yogis of the fourth plane misuse their spiritual powers and are reborn in the mineral state and have to go through the whole process of gross evolution before again getting the human form: otherwise no human being experiences a fall in the evolution of forms. The human form is the best of all physical forms; it is the only form in which God can be realized, and until God is realized the soul must continue with births and deaths.

The "Sanskaras" originated from the moment the individual "drop" came out of the "Creator Point" of the Infinite Ocean of Truth, to be conscious and to gain knowledge of Self. All subsequent forms and births are necessary for consciousness and self-knowledge. Sanskaras are created continually, until they become

[1] In some instances Baba advises people *never* to try to check stray thoughts or to drive them away. Let them come as they will is the instruction.

so thick that they remain about a man whether he is alive or dead: they must be separated from him before he can realize God, for until they are gone the "drop" forgets its original mission and is conscious only of the motion given to it by the sanskaras. A man does not realize God until all sanskaras are wiped away, but to wipe them away is very difficult.

On another occasion, while some members were sitting around him, Baba conveyed some hints as to his spiritual working:

The troubles of the world are due to thinking.[1] Soon I shall take this thinking upon myself, when my health will, most probably, be seriously affected. This is essential for my future working which will affect the whole world.

It is the duty of Saliks—Perfect Masters—those who are God-realized and who are also conscious of the world—to give an onward push to the subtle universe; but the Head has also to prepare the Circle and to make the members realize God as well as give an onward push to the gross universe. When they—the Perfect Masters—give such a push, they have to work for it; they have to come down from the state of Eternal Bliss (Nirvi Kalpa), which is located in the human body, at the top of the head, and take their position in the "Brahmand," the second position. This point is also called the junction between the Upper Bliss state and the Lower human form, from which we can see the whole of the lower parts of the body—equivalent to seeing the entire chain of past lives and forms, which one has to pass through before God-realization.

A duty is placed upon some few of the God-realized ones to come down to the junction and bring up those in the world who are worthy to be taken up, that is, worthy to be God-realized, because of their preparedness and spiritual connection. But such preparedness does not come easily. It requires ages upon ages of suffering and sacrifice and deep connection with a God-realized one. It is after ages of suffering that one is deemed worthy of being

[1] That is, to the working and vagaries of the mind.

admitted into a Circle for God-realization. God-realization means the destruction of all sanskaras, the "stopped" state of the mind, the end of all thinking. This is very difficult; for if the mind tries to stop thinking it tends towards the sound sleep state, that is, the unconscious. Even great yogis are unable to attain to this "stopped" state of mind for good; they can at the most stop thinking during meditations, concentrations, or samadhi, and even this creates new sanskaras; no sooner have they come down from the samadhi state than their minds start to work and the store of past undestroyed sanskaras gets added to. Hafiz has likened the body to a pot, the smoke of the fire to the soul, and sanskaras to a large stone on the top of the pot. "For all its attempts," he says, "the smoke never succeeds in throwing off the stone." For that, a sage must come and lift it away. Similarly, a bird may try to open its cage from the inside, but the door will never be opened till help comes from outside. In short, those who desire to gain spiritual benefit must be brave and patient to withstand severe blows.

One day at the beginning of April Baba went to pay a visit to a house in the city. It was the occasion of the Hindu New Year holiday, and after the distribution of sweets among the schoolboys and the recitation of special prayers Baba set off at 10 a.m. As soon as he had arrived Baba asked for dinner; but it was not ready, so he asked for tea, and that could not be got ready either. Baba then appeared to be grieved, and made as if to return to Meherabad at once. At the repeated entreaties of the host and his family Baba agreed to remain, and within half an hour tea was served.[1]

By this time a number of people from adjoining houses had gathered to pay their respects to Baba, including many ladies. Baba then gave a discourse on the Duty of a Woman for about an hour. In this discourse Baba referred to Hazrat

[1] This action of asking for food at unusual and inconvenient hours is not uncommon with Baba.

Babajan's early life. According to what he said, Babajan was the daughter of one of the chief ministers of the Amir of Afghanistan. In her youth she was exceptionally beautiful. From her childhood she had an inclination towards spirituality and the realization of the Truth. As she grew up this inclination became a deep-rooted desire for things other than those of this world. A brilliant and beautiful girl, she became a confirmed lover of the spirit. Maya, with all its powerful implements of lust, greed, and anger, had no influence over her. When she was barely fifteen her guardians began to arrange for her marriage; but being disinclined for it, she left home and disappeared. For fifty years thereafter she lived in complete resignation and renunciation. Her one aim was to find the One who would enable her to reach her divine Ideal. After long wanderings she at last came across her Master, and was God-realized at the age of sixty-five.

After this Babajan lived for some time in the Punjab, where people began to respect her as a saint and even to worship her. This and the occasional remarks of Babajan, in which she declared that she was God, upset the Mahommedans of the place, for it was nothing but blasphemy, and it was some of the most fanatical of them, certain Baluchis of a local regiment, who were so infuriated as one night to seize and bury her alive. When she came out of the living grave she went towards Bombay. Her movements are since well known, said Baba. How she lived for many years under the shelter of a neem tree in Poona, everybody knew. The moral of her life, said Baba, was always to aspire towards spiritual advancement. The things of this world are destroyed sooner or later, ending in nothing: aspire only for the things of the spirit.

The dinner was then served, places being arranged separately for the untouchables in the same room; Baba wished to sit with the untouchables, but at the entreaty of the host and

some of the Mandali he was induced to sit with the others, though a look of displeasure was on his face, casting a gloom upon the assembly. After dinner Baba and the Mandali visited the Anath (Destitute) Ashram, where the boys sang and Baba played with them. Baba was garlanded, and after prayers the party returned to Meherabad. There was a game of atya-patya, followed by discussion, then Baba and the Mandali retired.

On April 8th it was decided after several months' discussion to open a boarding school at Meherabad to be known as the Meher Ashram, with the object of providing ideal secular and spiritual education. The ashram inmates were to have no contact with anyone outside or with the Mandali except those appointed to take charge of the ashram. Rustamji was put in charge of the Mandali. Baba said that he wanted boys of all classes and creeds to enter the ashram. He said that the education imparted to the boys would prove a step towards the political salvation of India. Thus, besides the spiritual advancement of the boys, there would be material advancement too. The result of the teaching would be that the boys would have no longer any prejudice against any particular religion, which is the cause of much strife among people. Baba went on to say that some Indian leaders who advocate nationalism make fine speeches but lack toleration. The seeds of hatred and fanaticism would be destroyed in the boys who attended the school, and the toleration of all religions would lead to a Universal Religion for all.

On one occasion in April a party of four Parsee ladies, two from Nagar and two from Bombay, came to pay their respects to Baba. They were accompanied only by their chauffeur. They met Baba just as he had come out of his hut. As soon as they had paid their respects the ladies prepared

to return without asking any questions of Baba, or asking for any blessing or material or spiritual benefits, which was unusual. When asked if they had anything about which they wished to speak to Baba they said, "No, we wanted darshan, and we have got it," and with this they went away.

Thereafter for nearly two and a half hours Baba sat on the verandah of his hut surrounded by the Mandali. The peculiar feature of this sitting was that a perfect silence was observed by all. The usual talks and discussions were absent. The silence was broken only by the usual arti (prayers), and an hour later Baba signed for all to go to bed.

The next evening a devotee from Poona and his family came to pay respects to Baba, as they were about to make a visit to Kolhapur. The devotee's wife, before they left, asked Baba to give permission for one of the family to take tea at Kolhapur should they be pressed to do so. Baba had given an order that the family should not take tea at all. Baba granted the permission. Later he said to the devotee: "It was a mistake to ask for a change in an order once given. An order remains an order until withdrawn by me of my own accord. It should be observed at any cost. My words must never be broken. If I am asked for permission for anything to be done contrary to an order I have given, I do not refuse; but the effect of the order is lost." A few days later a young mother came to see Baba with her sick child. Baba managed to get out of her that she had not been following his instructions: the result was that both she and her child were suffering. He reminded her that once before she had failed to do what he had said, and had become seriously ill. Afterwards Baba pointed out to the Mandali that it was better not to ask for advice than to ask for it and not to act upon it. If the advice of a Saint is given, it must be acted upon. To neglect the words of one

who is recognized as God-realized makes one liable to great suffering, though one may not know how the suffering comes about. The consequences of such neglect are serious. "That is why I warn you," said Baba.

Once when speaking on the subject of sanskaras, Baba remarked that small children, owing to their innocence, were out of the influence of sanskaras, and were therefore susceptible to spiritual training and could be led easily to the Path.

Baba constantly found fault with the way in which the school for the village boys was being conducted, and on several occasions discussions took place as to the possibility of more suitable members of the Mandali being found than Dhake and Chanji, who were the principal and vice-principal respectively, to take charge of it. No better men came forward, however, for everyone thought twice before accepting such responsibilities, it being no easy matter to give satisfaction to Baba. To find fault, and apparently to be satisfied with no display of energy and ability, is Baba's method of training his disciples. His own peculiar way of scolding or praising his people is intended to discipline and test them. He said on one occasion:

Neither praise nor blame should distract you from the path of your duty. Leave aside all other considerations; if your conscience tells you that you have discharged the duty properly, that is enough. Your conscience is the best judge. It is human to err, and there must be mistakes, you can only do your best. Always be in time, look after your work, personally, do not leave anything to others, and then if mistakes happen they will be overlooked and pardoned. Even if I speak to you harshly about such mistakes do not take what I say to heart.

The school had been removed from the bungalow near the

village to Meherabad, where there was accommodation for the boys. Later on the girls' school, which had also been established in the village, was brought to Meherabad. One of the boys named Ramaji continued to give trouble, so Baba sent for him and asked if he wished to go home. The boy said he did, and Baba sent him off. Then the boy's father came to Baba full of apologies, and asked that Ramaji should return. Baba consented, but when the father returned home the boy refused to accompany him back to school. The father returned in anger to Baba, but Baba told him to be patient and sent for the boy himself, who when he came refused to speak except to repeat that he wished to go away from the school. Baba then offered to let the boy stay with the Mandali, which the boy immediately accepted. After some time Baba addressed the boys with Ramaji present. He told them that Ramaji was an excellent fellow in every respect except for pride. He said that all should cultivate humility and courtesy, which are the characteristics of educated men. The effect of education is to teach humility, not to increase pride. The example of the late Dadabhai Nauroji was referred to, the first Indian to enter Parliament, and Baba told the boys how he used to study under street lamps as a boy and how humble he remained when he became well known.

Once Baba rebuked one of the disciples for late rising. He said:

> Spiritual aspirants should get up very early. If you get up late, there is not much difference between you and the worldly-minded. The early hours of the morning—from three to six—are best for meditation. Five or six hours' sleep are quite sufficient for you. Those whom I have asked to meditate regularly must go to bed at nine and get up at three o'clock.

One morning Baba gave a discourse to the disciples on the

subject of egoism. He said that there are many who speak and write about egoism and the ways of killing it; but most people do not understand what it is, and their ways of killing it are the ways to maintain and to increase it. Egoism does not mean merely selfishness and being self-opinionated. To be conscious of your individual existence, of your body and mind, is also egoism. Did you not sleep last night? To think about it to-day is egoism. Did anyone call you bad names? To feel offence for that is egoism. Egoism is hydra-headed, but its main branches are four: (1) anger, (2) the joy arising from the gratification of passion, (3) avarice, (4) slander. There are two ways in which it can be diminished: by divine love, and by complete surrender of one's self to a Master.

THE MEHER ASHRAM

On May 1st the Meher Ashram was opened in temporary premises on the outskirts of the village of Arangaon. No attempt was made to organize a great display, and it was made a ceremony typical of Indian village life. There was a procession headed by Baba, and the various village bands played their favourite tunes. A special prayer was recited, and all were served with sweets and tea. The school was removed on June 30th to Meherabad in the tank premises on the hill. Ten boys were the first admitted to the Ashram: four Brahmins, three Mahars (untouchables), and three Marathas. They were provided with plain round black caps, khaki shirts and drawers, sandals, and a tweed coat: also each had a steel trunk, towel, handkerchiefs, blanket, rugs, bedspread, and pillow. The meals provided were: breakfast, tea and wheatbread; dinner, dal rice and a vegetable dish; supper, two vegetable dishes and wheatbread. Baba spent two hours at the school every day, inspecting the work that was done.

On July 17th a Persian section of the school was opened with fourteen boys from Persia: two Mahommedans and twelve Zoroastrians. From September onwards Baba spent more time at the school, and classes for spiritual teaching were started. Baba began to join the boys at play and frequently took meals with them. On November 2nd Baba made an order that the boys were not to speak to anyone apart from themselves and the teachers and staff of the school, and eight days later he began a fast, taking nothing but milk or weak tea. This fast he continued for five months. During November Baba devoted two hours each evening to teaching the boys himself, using of course the alphabet board. This continued until December 20th, when Baba confined himself to a small double hut near the school, which had been built by his orders about five months earlier. The hut was about six feet in length and four feet wide, and consisted of two rooms, one above the other. Baba remained in seclusion in this place until February 28th in the following year. He received visitors and others in the upper room, which was approached by an outside staircase. The day on which he went into seclusion Baba gave orders that "All the boys in the Institution must not be touched with the hand by anyone, including the class teachers and the school and ashram authorities."

From this time onwards certain of the boys manifested emotional tendencies, devoting themselves to meditation which often led to periods of weeping. In the New Year this practice of weeping spread to the whole school and after a time disorganized the classes. At the beginning of February Baba gave orders that the classes were to be strictly conducted, though he did not otherwise check the displays of emotion. Rumours as to what was happening in the school reached the parents, some of whom were disturbed, and several of the

boys were taken away, including a favourite pupil, Syed Ali. On the day after this boy was removed by his father Baba left his retirement on the hill and went into Meherabad colony below, returning to his hut. Two of the disciples desired to go after Ali and his father to induce the latter to permit the boy to return, and Baba gave his consent, saying that unless Ali returned within seven days the school would be closed. On the sixth day the two envoys came back from Bombay unsuccessful, but Baba bade them go back and try again. Next day Ali returned; he had escaped from his father the previous evening, had caught the Madras mail train, and got off at Ahmednagar. Soon after his arrival there came a message from Bombay to say that Ali's father was willing for the boy to return to school; but he did not know of the boy's escape, and in the evening he turned up with the intention of bringing his son home again. Desperate efforts were made to dissuade him, which succeeded by the following morning, and the father went back alone, having signed a document agreeing to his son remaining at the school.

In March the school was divided into two sections, the ordinary section where the boys pursued the normal studies, and the "Prem (Divine Love) Ashram," the special section of the school for chosen boys, where the boys spent much of their time in meditation, though their studies were not neglected. On April 1st Babajan paid a visit to the school, to see "The place of my child." She came without warning, and her stay at the school during that day was a great event. A fortnight later, April 15th, Baba ended his fast, which had lasted for five months and fifteen days, and took some food.

At the beginning of May it was suggested to Baba by a visitor, who was also an estate agent, that there was a site near Poona which would make an ideal place for the ashram, and Baba immediately said that he would like to change the

ashram at once. So it was arranged that he should see the land, which, however, he did not like. The day that Baba made this trip was the occasion of the second visit of Babajan to the school. When he returned he said that the second visit made it necessary that the ashram should be removed, and another site being proposed at the village of Toka, which is midway between Ahmednagar and Aurangabad—a site which Baba liked—he gave instructions for the removal, which was completed within fifteen days, and on June 3rd the Mandali and ashram were transferred to Toka.

The change in the location of the school brought Ali's father on the scene again, but he was soon satisfied, though not for long, for in August he returned with the request, "I want to take Ali with me." After fruitlessly discussing the matter for two days the father resorted to law to upset the agreement under which his son was at school, and Ali was handed over to his father. At the same time several other boys were taken away by their parents. During this period an increasing number of boys were engaged in meditation, getting up at early hours of the morning for the purpose, and Baba suspended all the regulations of the school so far as they affected the boys' relations with himself and allowed them to come to him at any time. He spent many hours with them, taking part in their games and letting himself be photographed in many fantastic dresses, as desired by the boys.

From September 10th Baba resumed fasting, and on the 23rd Baba and the boys included in the Prem-Ashram took up new quarters which had been erected, Baba occupying a room built of lime and bricks having three windows and a door and measuring 7 feet by 7 feet. The other building for the boys consisted of thirty-two rooms, each 7 feet by 4 feet, with a special verandah for Baba.

Twenty days after he had been taken home Ali made a

further attempt to return to the school. He got as far as Ahmednagar, when he was recognized by one of his father's friends and then brought back to Bombay. He made another attempt on October 4th, which was successful. Baba was now continuing to fast, but was serving meals to the boys in the Prem-Ashram and was holding classes, two, sometimes three, and at other times four a day, when he discoursed to them on Love, on God, and on the Spiritual Path. He would also be with them during their lessons, and in the intervals he would have them to sit near him and sacred songs would be played on the gramophone. When the weather got colder in November, Baba decided that Toka was too inclement for the boys and ordered that the ashram and school should be removed back to Meherabad, near Arangaon. At this date the number of boys was 102, of whom 49 were Hindus, 20 Mussulmans, 32 Zoroastrians, and 1 Christian. All the boys, except those in the Prem-Ashram, were given a vacation and sent home during the removal. As soon as this decision had been come to the father of Ali came and took away his son for the third time.

Within three weeks new huts had been constructed on the old site, and the boys were invited to return, which the majority did; but instead of Ali there came his father in search of the boy, who had been placed in a school at Bombay, from which he had disappeared. Ali was not found at Meherabad, but his father was persuaded to allow him to stay if he did turn up. On the following day Ali arrived. Another boy, Ahmed Muhammed, who had been taken away by his parents in August from Toka, also decided to return, and leaving home without money or food he found his way back on foot, taking six days on the journey.

A change in the curriculum was made, an English course being substituted for matriculation, and the school was renamed Hazrat Babajan English School. Baba continued to

give most of his time to the Prem-Ashram boys. To teach humility, for a period of one month he cleaned the boys' latrines, allowing only his younger brother to help him. But the days of the school were numbered. Towards the end of the year it was proposed by one of the disciples to start the publication of a monthly magazine. When Baba heard of the proposal he smiled and said that the disciple could do as he pleased.

During the summer of this year one of Baba's disciples, Rustam K. S. Irani, was sent to England to endeavour to get Western boys to enter the school; but he encountered unexpected difficulties, for no one could understand why free education in India should be offered to English children, and when these difficulties arose Baba sent him a cable telling him to return at once. The outcome of this visit was, however, that three English people who had come into contact with Rustrom set out for India to stay with Baba, and arrived at Meherabad in June, where they remained, living under Baba's direction, until January 2nd of next year.

In the middle of October Sadhu Christian Leik, a Russian, who had lived much in England and America and was on his third pilgrimage to India, came to Baba. Leik was a spiritually minded man, a disciple of Ramakrishna, to whom he had been introduced by the works of Swami Vivekananda; he used the name "Sadhu" out of respect for Sadhu Sundar Singh, the Indian Christian mystic and teacher, who visited Europe and America in 1920, and under whose influence Leik fell. He came to Baba from the Himalayas, where he had been warned against Baba; but when he saw him he knew at once, he said, that Baba was his Master and that all his past experiences were for the sake of leading him there. He said later on about this experience:

Seven years earlier the Master (Ramakrishna) had given me in

London the direction I had to take from the Himalayas to reach my Master in the body. In a day vision I was shown a stream of light shining from the Almora district across the plains of India towards Bombay. I was reminded of this vision last September. About the same time as the vision was given me in London, my second Master had told his disciples in Bombay that I would join him in the near future. Noren (Vivekananda) had prepared me for Shri Ramakrishna, my unseen Master, and the latter had put me through all kinds of sufferings to make me fit for the Master in the flesh, Shri Meher Baba, by whose grace I shall reach the ultimate goal by being one with God.

Baba told Leik to maintain silence, and he stayed at Meherabad.

The first number of the *Meher Message* appeared on the first of the month of January 1929. It contained forty pages, with articles by the editor, Kai Khushru Jamshedji Dastur, the motto on the cover being "Majesty in Servitude." There were extracts from Baba's writings, extracts from the editor's diary, and other contributions. Baba was referred to by the editor as "His Holiness," and he described himself as "The Disciple of His Divine Majesty," which was objected to by the Mandali; but the editor would not listen to them, and Baba, as usual, was indifferent to such matters.

The boys in the ashram had each a room to himself for private meditation; one Zoroastrian boy lost his normal consciousness during meditation on January 1st, and Baba restored it to him within half an hour. The three English visitors left on the 2nd of the month to establish a centre for Baba in England. During this month Baba repeated what he had frequently said before, that a devastating war would surely break out and that he would then manifest himself to the world. On one occasion, when reference was made to

those who attack him, Baba said, "They should not be hated. They too are unconsciously serving my cause. Just as you are keeping connection with me, so are they often thinking of me."

One day Baba said that he proposed to close the ashram for two months and go on a walking tour. The boy Ali—who, as I have related, had been withdrawn from the school by his father on three occasions, and had on each occasion left home and returned to the ashram—was for the fourth time taken away on January 13th. It was immediately afterwards that Baba spoke about closing the ashram, and his decision was immediately put into effect, so that on the 16th Baba was ready to start on his tour. The boys were sent home, being told that Baba would ask them to return as soon as possible. Baba took with him twenty disciples, but returned to everyone's surprise within ten days. The day after his return, January 28th, the birthday of Babajan was celebrated. Baba sent some of the disciples to the homes of some of the boys from the ashram to learn how they were progressing.

Baba's birthday was celebrated as usual. By his request it was kept as quiet as possible, but from early morning until midnight devotees came to pay their respects. In the morning he served tea to the disciples. At eight o'clock he went in a carriage drawn by two disciples to the village temple, where there were about two hundred Hindus of both sexes who made their devotions to him. Baba was dressed in the robe of Shri Krishna, and a special service was performed in his honour. Afterwards Baba returned to the camp, and then his feet were washed by the devotees, several hundred taking part. Afterwards Baba took a bath and then was garlanded, when a lecture was given by a Hindu devotee. In the afternoon there was music and singing, and in the evening bhajan, acting, and fireworks.

On February 21st Baba announced that he would not receive any visitors. The ashram was formally reopened on the following day. A few days later, during a visit to the Happy Valley, five of the disciples climbed the hill named Mangor Subha, which is about a thousand feet high. They went, without asking Baba, by the most difficult way and returned that way also, not choosing to take an easier way to the top. On their way back they got into difficulties; but remembering Baba they asked for his help and got safely down. The incident would not be worth recording except as an illustration of Baba's methods. When the five returned they were asked by the others what they had been doing, for Baba had been reprimanding them severely. When a disciple is in danger Baba sometimes rebukes him in his absence, and at the same time sends internal help; that is how he works.

Baba gave much spiritual instruction to the boys of the ashram during February and March. One Mahommedan boy lost gross consciousness one day in March for an hour and a half, and for some days was in a supra-normal state, not wishing to eat or drink, though Baba made him take liquid food until he recovered. Baba said about this boy that he had received a taste of spiritual ecstasy and would continue to regard the gross world as a mirage. He would lose the bliss he had experienced, but it would be followed by higher ecstasy. One of the disciples discussed with Baba the statement that there is nothing but God. In the course of his explanation Baba said, "Just as matter does not exist in your dreams, so it does not exist for me when I am awake. What you experience in your sound sleep with regard to matter, a God-realized man experiences in the waking state. My waking state is real, yours is false. When you realize God you will see this for yourself, provided you regain consciousness of the gross world."

THE CAVE IN THE TIGER VALLEY

In April 1929 Baba was invited to Panchgani, a popular hill resort about two hundred miles from Bombay. He went there with a few of his Mandali as the guest of the principal of the Hindu High School, who is an ardent devotee. During Baba's stay almost all the boys came to see him. Baba explained many interesting things which they as schoolboys could easily understand and act upon.

Baba liked the school and its surroundings, and inquired if it was possible for a cave to be constructed on one of the hills of the Western Ghat mountain range, since he desired to retire in seclusion for a certain period. Instructions were given to dig out a cave fifteen feet deep within a month. One of Baba's close disciples who lived there got to work, and with the help of some of the Mandali and some paid labourers a cave was dug on a spot selected by Baba, on the top of the Tiger Valley near Panchgani.

During the digging of the cave, Baba and the Mandali, about twenty in number, stayed in a specially erected hut made of dry grass by the side of the Hindu High School.

This retirement, Baba explained, was important for his future working, and he therefore selected twelve to sit there at Panchgani, and also in Meherabad, in different places, as directed by him. One was to sit in a hut near his cave, in seclusion, and four others were kept with him in two huts, one above, the other below, to keep strict watch night and day by turns, to allow nobody to come within a radius of about two hundred yards. The other seven were sent to Meherabad to remain there in seclusion in places detailed to them. All the twelve had to fast, taking only a glass of milk twice a day, while Baba remained on water and very weak tea, which was to be taken to him by Chhagan, who was

specially appointed to this duty. None of those on watch duty had to go near him except Chhagan, the one who had to take water and tea to Baba, and that too when called by Baba, which he did by clapping his hands. Those on watch duty had to keep at a distance of about fifty feet on the right side, where a hut was erected for two of them. The other hut was some fifty feet above, so that the two watchmen staying there could see a longer distance to warn people from approaching near. A third small hut was erected on the left side of Baba at an equal distance of fifty feet, where one disciple, Vishnu, was kept in seclusion.

The news of Baba's retirement in the cave and fasting spread, especially among the devotees, and many of them living in different places far and near voluntarily kept fast with the Master, living on milk, but doing their worldly duties all the while.

This strict system of seclusion and fasting by Baba and Mandali simultaneously lasted for twelve days unbroken. After fifteen days Baba told some to break the fast, some were told to do so after a month, and a few after two or three months, while he himself remained on milk for about three months. The period of keeping in seclusion also varied, according to Baba's instructions, to some after fifteen days, to others after a month, and to a few after two or three months, as he deemed fit.

Two spiritual aspirants who had recently joined Baba, feeling very enthusiastic, had voluntarily asked Baba for permission to observe privations and fasts, etc., but were from time to time checked by Baba for their over-enthusiastic efforts, unless he himself gave them orders. They too had volunteered to retire in seclusion with Baba and the Mandali. Baba warned them repeatedly that it would be difficult for them, but they pleaded so strongly that Baba, although

reluctantly, gave them permission, but specially instructed them to come out immediately and go home whenever they found it too hard. They started fasting, retiring in seclusion with Baba and his party, but they had to come out at the end of twenty-four hours.

The Tiger Valley, as its name indicates, is a haunt of tigers and leopards, the latter being often found crossing fields and even public roads and fields in Panchgani. One evening the people of the place from which Chhagan used to bring milk every day saw a leopard two minutes after Chhagan had left with the milk following the same track. Chhagan himself knew nothing about it, though he came rather late that evening. As for the Mandali on watch duty, they had no weapons except a bamboo stick, which Baba told everyone to keep at hand, especially on night duty. And their only safeguard from any possible attack by tigers at night was a hurricane lamp kept outside each of the huts. The door of the hut was not locked from the inside, but kept slightly open a few inches to enable the man on duty to see outside, and give an alarm if anything appeared to rouse the sleeping companion in the hut, and also to warn the inmates of the other hut. This alarm was to be given by striking the empty kerosene-oil tins with the bamboo stick.

The watch duty was to be done eight hours daily, four hours during day-time and four at night alternately. This watch duty was no pleasant task. For although the particular spot near the Tiger Valley where Baba retired into seclusion was not frequented by people, the rumour that Shri Meher Baba had retired there in a cave brought people in numbers, especially during the morning and evening hours, some out of curiosity, but many with a desire for darshan. The watchers had a hard task to stop them, for the visitors came sometimes in groups of fifty, and often they had to be severe, much

against their will, and many a time actually to beg them not to misunderstand. It was by no right, legal or otherwise, that people were induced to go away, but by humble requests and explanations mildly and gently given.

Panchgani is a hill-station, and this was the season when the climate is very cool compared with the heat in the surrounding country, and many visitors had come to the place for the season. Some young men tried to get a glance of Baba from a dangerous corner on a rock on the other side. It was a very risky spot, but Baba's watchers had no orders to shout aloud, only to speak in a very low voice when necessary. Otherwise to carry on conversation by signs.

A fortnight passed thus, when one night suddenly at eight o'clock Baba called them all and told them to arrange immediately to leave, silently and without informing anyone. There is no railway there, and cars are not allowed to cross the mountain *ghauts* after a certain hour in the evening, even if cars could be had, which was out of the question in such a place as Panchgani. There was nothing else to do but to walk down to Wai, the town at the foot of the hill some miles away; after much trouble, and for the sake of the luggage and bedding, a bullock-cart was got after great difficulty, and at midnight they removed their things from their huts in the pitch-dark.

Baba wanted to walk, and they all came down the *ghauts* on foot, with baggage in their hands and on their heads; and thus after four hours' climbing over dangerous ground they arrived at Wai after midnight, where they rested in the dak bungalow till morning, and at 10 a.m. were off in a bus for Meherabad.

The devotees of Baba at Panchgani were informed of Baba's silent departure in a note written from Wai, with his usual final instructions "not to worry about it, as it was for

no fault or negligence on their part, but for his own reasons, that he had left so suddenly without informing anyone."

Baba's fast and seclusion continued after returning to Meherabad for about three months. The Mandali continued to fast too—but not for so long. Some were released after a month, and some later, from fast and seclusion.

It may be noted that it was in the same cave that Baba sent two of his Mandali to retire in seclusion at different periods. Behramji, for twenty-one days on a very severe fast, to remain only on water. And after these twenty-one days, when he was ordered to come out, he was instructed to fast nineteen days more, but was allowed to drink milk during this period. So that in all he fasted for forty days.

The other member sent to this cave for a longer period was K. Pleader, of Baba's Mandali, who had been observing silence and fasting for some years, living only on milk, and was during all these years locked in a small room, at different places in Nasik and Meherabad, with orders even not to read or write. He had not seen Baba five times in five years. At Panchgani he had to continue fasting, but was allowed to take fruit in addition to milk.

Even after he was called out of the cave he was ordered to continue the silence and fast simultaneously. But he was later given permission to move about, which he utilized in visiting quiet places in the mountains and retirement, probably at the resting-place of a Saint or a Master; he has been on Baba's orders to Mount Abu, Rishikesh (the abode of the Rishis), and Badrinarayan on the Himalayas, both places of great religious importance to millions of Hindus, being the holy seats of the Rishis and Sadhus who observe strict penances.

SECLUSION IN KASHMIR

Later on Baba made a tour to Nasik, Hardwar, Hrishikesh, Delhi, Quetta, and Bombay, and in search of a place of retirement he visited various other places, returning at the end of May. He had been fasting for the last seven days of the tour and continued to fast for five days more. At the end of the fast he consented to receive visitors again.

On June 7th the fifty-ninth birthday of Shri Upasni Maharaj was celebrated, though the actual date of the birthday was May 25th. Over twelve hundred people came to Baba, and he distributed sweets to his devotees. About two hundred people washed Baba's feet. There was a special Hindu service in the village temple, and in the afternoon there was singing, and the day passed as on Baba's birthday except that the name of Upasni was in everybody's mouth. Many Parsees were present on this occasion.

Baba made another tour on July 10th, this time in a bus with about twelve of the Mandali, returning on August 28th. Everywhere he went his presence created a sensation. He visited Nasik, Khalghat, Gwalior, Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Srinagar, Hervan, and Dhulia.

During this tour to Kashmir Baba expressed his desire to retire in seclusion in an isolated spot. A suitable place was searched for, first by the Mandali, according to his instructions, and then with him accompanying them. He decided to stay at the small village of Harvan, about twelve miles from Srinagar (the capital of Kashmir State), to search for a suitable spot nearby. It was very quiet, with charming surroundings and an atmosphere suited to their purpose.

Immediately after Baba's arrival at Harvan the people of the village and surrounding places came to see him and paid their homage and respects. The majority were poor people,

and Baba ordered a public feast to be given to all before he went into seclusion. A feast was accordingly arranged, when hundreds were treated with, to them, a sumptuous meal of rice and vegetables.

Two small houses were hired at the foot of the hills. After an arduous survey of the surroundings a spot was selected about 500 feet high on the side of a hill. Srinagar itself is more than 5,200 feet above sea-level, and Harvan is still higher, so that the height of the spot selected may be roughly estimated at 6,000 feet. Here a small hut was built with a room with just sufficient space for a person to lie down and no more, the roof jutting out on two sides to form a shelter for two others of the Mandali, who were ordered to stay there and keep watch over Baba, who had locked himself in the small cabin-like room.

The villagers helped to work, under a devoted Mahommedan, in the erection of the hut, which was completed in three days. And after giving necessary instructions to the Mandali, Baba retired and locked himself in. He fasted during the entire period of the retirement, taking only water, which was passed to him through a small window at the side at a certain hour daily when he knocked from inside, and received the water through the window without being seen by anybody.

The two keeping watch outside were Gustadji and Behramji, who had also to keep fast, but were allowed to take milk and fruit twice a day. Behramji was also ordered to abstain from speaking during the period. Gustadji had already been observing silence since 1927. Two members of the Mandali staying in the village were to come up twice a day with fresh water for Baba and milk and fruit for the other two, each by turn, one in the morning and one in the evening. During their stay near the hut they too had to observe complete silence, and to communicate when necessary with the two outside by signs.

They were not to make any noise and to do everything very quietly.

Chanji was placed on night duty, to keep watch while the other two slept. The night watcher was strictly ordered to sit outside Baba's cabin and not to move under any circumstances. A stick was given to him to keep away scorpions, snakes, and other small animals, and a fire was to be kept burning all night to keep away wild animals. The place was full of wild animals—tigers, bears, wolves, and others. The hill was a select spot for hunters, being a haunt of tigers.

The watchers found it frightening to keep watch through the pitch-dark nights, with the howls and cries of wild beasts and the occasional roars of tigers reaching their ears. They could often hear distinctly the soft pad-pad of animals prowling in the darkness. Chanji confesses that he was nervous when Baba first asked him to do night-watch duty, and admitted to Baba that he might fail. But Baba cheered up his failing spirit with the encouraging message, "Am I not with you, so near, just one step away?" He was, indeed, "but what of the door locked from the inside, and the other two asleep?" Chanji thought.

The return to Meherabad was as usual made without warning. One day Baba came down from the hut, unknown to anyone except the Mandali. He wished no one to know so that he could leave the place quickly and undisturbed. Had the villagers known, they would have flocked around him, which he wished to avoid.

The chief characteristic of the return journey was that Baba and his disciples did not take shelter during the day or even at night throughout the entire journey under any roof; that is, they did not pass the nights in dak bungalows or dharamshalas (resting-houses) or hotels, as they had done during the outward journey, but took shelter and rest in the open under trees,

in woods, or by the side of a river or stream. So that they drove during the day from early morning till late at night (sometimes till midnight), stopping only for the morning meals which they cooked themselves and ate under the shelter of trees, where they rested too during the night, even when it rained. Many a day they had no time to wash even in the early morning, but had to wrap up their bedding and drive again till about 10 a.m., when it got too hot, and they would stop for meals and ablutions. Thus they returned to Meherabad, Ahmednagar. We get here an example of Baba's way of training his disciples. They are given in rapid succession experiences of comfort and hardship—often in the same day.

SECOND VISIT TO PERSIA

Immediately on his return Baba declared that it was necessary for him to visit some part of Persia, and a new tour started on September 2nd. He first went to Bombay, and the news of his arrival brought some thousands of people to pay their respects to him, including Hindus, Mahommedans, Christians, and hundreds of Parsees. Baba gave instructions to many devotees. Some difficulties arose over Baba's passport. As he had given up writing for some years he could not complete the passport form with his signature, and the passport authorities would not accept his thumb-mark, which was Baba's usual way at that time of signing documents. The Persian Consul, however, even without his signature, offered to issue a Persian passport, which as a Persian subject he was entitled to have. This Baba accepted, and the passport was issued. Eventually, as a British-born subject Baba took a British passport.

Baba left Bombay by the steamship *Versowa* on September 20th. A great crowd came to see him off, including many

Parsee ladies, and he was garlanded with flowers. But Baba travelled third class on the open deck, much to the surprise of the captain and officers of the ship.

Before leaving Bombay a Parsee merchant and contractor came aboard the *Versowa* and saw hundreds of people gathered round Baba's seat, which was on a hatch on the deck. He had heard of Baba, but had never seen him before. He knew one of Baba's devotees, and asked: "How can a saintly person travel on the deck? I will arrange a nice cabin for him in the upper class." The devotee explained: "It is all right. He always travels lowest class." The Parsee smiled, and approached Baba. "This is no place for one of your dignity. I will arrange for you in a better place, suitable to your position. Pray permit me." Baba told him that he was happy where he was. "A Fakir's place is always with the poorest." But the man could not see him so uncomfortably accommodated, and insisted on doing something about it. He caught hold of the hand of the devotee he knew and took him to the captain, whom he knew very well, to arrange that Baba and his party got everything they wanted, offering to pay for it. The captain promised to do all he could and requested the devotee to let him know of anything that Baba desired.

The captain and the chief officer came daily to inquire if Baba wanted anything, but he desired nothing during the entire voyage but a bath, which was arranged in the second class. The stewards (who were Goanese, Portuguese Roman Catholics), who saw Baba going in and coming out of the bathroom, asked the devotee who accompanied him, "Who is this Christ-like person? Is he your (living) Christ?"

Baba's identity was not disclosed on board, and Baba saw no one except a Mahommedan (a member of the crew working in the engine-room), who used to come and stand for minutes

in a corner opposite to Baba, with tears in his eyes. He did not utter a word, nor did Baba say anything to him for five days, but on the last day Baba called him near and gave him his handkerchief. Tears again fell from the man's eyes in appreciation of the gift.

At Karachi the mayor of the city and the embarkation officer of the shipping company were among those who came to see Baba on board. Baba stayed till late at night at the house of a disciple, and was taken back to the ship next morning by the mayor.

The chief characteristics of Baba's visit to Persia were: (*a*) The unexpected and very hearty welcome with which he was received at many places where he was known, by the rich and poor alike: and (*b*) the sufferings which he and his party experienced, due to difficulties in travel over expanses of sandy desert where, apart from the scarcity of food and water, which could not be had for days, there was the constant danger from bandits who abound in the greater part of Luristan through which the party had to pass.

The places visited were Mohamerah, Dezful, Khurramabad, Malayar, Ispahan, Yezd, Kerwan, Bam, and Duzdab.

Although this tour, like the others, was kept strictly private, very few of Baba's devotees being informed, people came from all parts of the country, among them men of high position, including Government and military officers. They came suddenly to desire "a 'mulakat' with the 'Buzoorg' " (the honour of meeting with the holy being). They considered his presence in their country to be a mark of great fortune, and a mark of hope for its redemption, which they believed to rest in the hands of the Masters of Perfection. They were disappointed not to be allowed to hail him in public. Many wished to have King Reza Shah to meet him, and offered to

arrange it, but though Baba appreciated their love and devotion he would not allow any demonstration.

Baba stayed in Yezd for four days. The town flocked to him, and he had a busy time "talking" to people individually and collectively.

Four receptions were given in Baba's honour. One of them was at a public school, where boys and girls from different schools gathered together with their parents and guardians. Another was given by Arbab Sohrab, the leading merchant of Yezd, a man of influence in Government and social circles. As the reception was open to all, rich and poor alike, thousands surrounded the grounds and there was such a rush that several people narrowly escaped being crushed. All desired to have a glimpse and touch of Baba's person.

Mahommedans, who never have a photo of any saint, not even of their prophet, asked to have one of Baba to pin on their breasts in memory of his visit to them. One of the finance members of the Persian Government came especially to greet Baba. Speeches were delivered by many prominent citizens of the town.

An important leader of the Bahais (who believe in Abdu'l Bahā and follow the faith proclaimed by him) came by aeroplane from Shiraz with the object of seeing Baba and challenging him with questions; but the moment he saw Baba and felt his touch he forgot his challenge and questions. He wept, and falling prostrate at Baba's feet cried, "You are God!" Then he rushed out to proclaim to others, "I have seen God!" All who heard him were much astonished.

At Bam, where Baba had put up in a quiet rest-house on the outskirts of the town, a man in military uniform with several stripes on his chest walked up to the gate and asked for admission to see the Holy Master whom he heard had just arrived. He was told by one of Baba's party that there

was no such person there. But the officer would not believe it, and insisted, very respectfully however, that the Holy One be informed that "a beggar had arrived, begging for alms from him." When informed of this Baba allowed him to be admitted, so in marched the officer with his military gait, but with his hands folded reverently on his chest (this is a mark of respect in Persia). He saluted Baba at first in Persian military style, then laid down his sword and fell on his knees to kiss with reverence the hand of Baba which was offered. Asked who he was, he replied, "Your humble slave!" "What is your rank?" was Baba's next inquiry. "Nothing, beside your Holiness!" "I mean your military rank," explained Baba. "A general of the Persian Army." Baba patted him on the back. "To die in the service of one's country is great indeed; but to die in the service of God is greater," said Baba on the board. "Indeed, Holy Master, I understand, and I implore your grace and help in my aspiration towards divinity." "I will help you," said Baba. With closed eyes the military man bowed low in gratitude, and said: "If I may be permitted, I would say, dear Master, that although I belong to the army, I humbly believe that the salvation of this country lies not in its military power but in its spiritual rebirth through an understanding of life, brought about by the benign grace of great Buzoorgs, of your exalted dignity, and I humbly pray on behalf of my country for the great gift of your grace on this unfortunate country and its ignorant people." "That is why you see me here," was Baba's reply. "That is the country's great privilege. May your blessings redeem the land of Iran!" Having said that in beautiful Persian the officer retired from Baba's presence, moving backward step by step with his face towards Baba. It was a touching scene.

Another incident is worth recording. As is the rule in every country, visitors to Persia are required to furnish particulars

as to their names, occupations, relations, positions in life, etc. A military police officer of high rank came one evening, in full dress with numerous marks of distinction on his uniform, to inquire for the particulars of the party. He was given the required information, but with Baba's identity concealed under his family name, Merwan Shereriarji Irani. After his inquiries had been answered the officer asked to see Arbab Merwan (Mr. Merwan), the leader of the party, formally. He was told that it could not be done, since the gentleman (meaning Baba) did not wish to see visitors. But the officer insisted, pretending that it was in his official capacity that he wanted to see the gentleman. With equal insistence he was refused. The member of the party who was talking with the officer felt all the while that there was something behind the questions and the attitude of the officer. He was therefore not surprised when the latter gave up his official attitude and said, "I want to see Hazrat Meher Baba!" He further explained, by way of apology, that he had to assume an official attitude against his will, and because he was told that Baba would see no one. He was allowed to see Baba, and left feeling happy. When informed of the trick with which the officer had tried to get admission, Baba said that he appreciated it, and explained that it was the spirit behind the action he sees, not the action itself.

In the street opposite to the place in which Baba put up in Bam there was the seat of a Buzoorg (saint), whom the local people followed and held in great reverence. When Baba came out of the gate to go for an evening walk with the Mandali the Buzoorg got up from his seat as a mark of respect for Baba, whom he seemed to know. He told all who came to him thereafter that there was in their midst "the Emperor of all Fakirs," so that the people were amazed, and there was again a rush to have a glance at Baba.

Among those to whom the Buzoorg spoke about Baba and asked to visit him was a Dervish, who came to see Baba and asked for his grace. Baba explained something to him, at which he said, "In the thirty years of my Dervishi I could not understand what renunciation really meant; but you have explained it to me now, I understand!" and without further discussion he paid his respects to Baba and went away.

The main outlets of Persia to India are by sea, by its three ports Bushire, Bunder Abbas, and Mohamerah. The only one by land is via Duzdab, but very few foreigners who visit Persia go by that route, since it is difficult to get across the desert between Bam and Duzdab. Many a caravan has perished there, buried in the sands. Therefore some members of Baba's party wondered why he took the land route to Bam and Duzdab when there were easier and safer routes by sea via Bunder Abbas. Even the manager of the bus service, which on rare occasions operated through the desert, expressed his surprise at the selection of this route and warned the party about the dangers and the risks they were undertaking in crossing the desert, telling them that "Going across this route is inviting death." But when they insisted he promised to arrange it, though reluctantly. The route is mainly used for the transport of goods from Persia to the surrounding countries, and is not meant for passenger traffic. He promised to give them one of the most expert drivers on the route, thoroughly conversant with the perils of the crossing, and a good mechanic.

Baba had given definite instructions to reserve a bus exclusively for the party, with not a single article of luggage belonging to anyone else. This was promised, and all arrangements were made to start next day.

Before starting, however, Baba sent some of the party to

see that his instructions had been carried out. The driver put in two bags of almond shells, saying that they were very light, which they were. Baba did not like him breaking his promise, but though he was displeased he did not say anything, and the bus left Bam at about 4 p.m. The Mandali felt, from Baba's request being ignored by the driver, that "something" was ahead. The next halt was after two hours, in a rest-house where the party could rest for the night, proceeding next morning. Although the bus was practically new and in a sound condition and was fitted with new tyres, two tyres burst within the period of one hour, to the amazement of the driver. They were already late by one hour through mending the last tyre, and still had some miles to go, when suddenly something went wrong with the radiator. Steam puffed out of the radiator cap, though water had only recently been put in. On inspection all parts of the engine were found to be in good condition. The driver almost scratched his ear off trying to find out why the radiator got so hot without any apparent reason. He poured in fresh water and started again, but after a few minutes the radiator again began to get overheated. Stopping the engine the driver again examined every part of it carefully. He racked his brains trying to find the cause of the trouble, when suddenly he discovered a crack at the bottom of the radiator, through which the water was oozing out. It was the last thing the driver had expected. He could not proceed very far with the car in this condition, so he drove slowly and carefully to the resting-place, which was reached in safety. He tried the whole night to mend the cracked radiator, but in vain. Tired, he went to rest in the morning, and tried again and again for two days. The resting-house was in a very small village, where it was impossible to get any material, but he managed to repair it at last. He mixed some powder with the white of

an egg, making it into a paste through which the water could not ooze out. All wondered how he had done it. The man's skill and perseverance were remarkable: he repeatedly uttered: "Ya Allah [Oh, my God], I never had such an experience before!" He started the engine after the radiator was filled with water. It ran smoothly for a few minutes, and then the water began to ooze out again.

He was taken aback, utterly broken. It was in this moment of despair that the realization of "something" he had up till now failed to realize came to him. He rushed to the room where Baba was sitting. He met Kaikhushru Afsari (of Baba's Mandali), and cried to him, "Brother, I realize now why and how it all happened. It is all so clear. I broke my promise to your Master, and this is the result of my ignorance and folly! How can I ask for his mercy and pardon now? I feel so miserable and ashamed to show my face to him. Won't you plead for me, please?" Afsari understood and sympathized. But he had warned the driver seriously before starting from Bam not to break his promise to Baba, but the driver had taken it too lightly at the time. However, now that he realized his mistake and had suffered so much he was taken to Baba, who not only forgave him, but advised him: "Never disregard the word of a Buzoorg. And never break a promise, and be true to your word, to whomsoever given." He was instructed to return to Bam in the same car, driving slowly and carefully, and to bring another car immediately. It seemed impossible to drive the car with its leaking radiator over such rough and rugged roads across the desert. But Baba told him not to worry, that he would see that he reached Bam safely, provided he followed his instructions and drove slowly. It looked hopeless, but he agreed to venture on the four hours' journey back, now that he knew who Baba was. He reached Bam without mishap and sent another big

car with another driver, as he felt too tired to come back himself.

All this meant a delay of three days for Baba and the party in an isolated desert place, though he kept himself and the others busy one way or the other. What they thought was this: that the chauffeur had suffered, but in suffering had learned a lesson and had an unforgettable experience; how much Baba had suffered to teach a lesson to an individual, he alone knew!

Immediately on the arrival of the new car the party started again. There were eighteen in the bus, of whom two were ill and had to lie down, and they had over a hundred packages of luggage of all sizes and sorts. They had great difficulty in keeping intact the kunjas (earthenware water-pots) which had been filled with water to use in the desert, where no water could be had for days. It was not long before trouble began once more. They were held up at several places, the wheels of the bus sticking in the sand. They were tired, and there was hardly sufficient sitting-space; they had to remain in the same uncomfortable position for hours without changing until compelled by sheer helplessness to do so. It would have been bearable had they any hopes that it would all end in a few hours. As a matter of fact their only hope was in Baba, who alone could take them safely to their destination, just as easily as he had got them upon that hazardous and painful venture!

The driver of the bus expected to finish the journey in six days at the earliest under the heavy load he had to carry. He got tired and nervous. After a few hours on the first day he said he could not drive—complaining of pains all over the body—and he asked for rest. But Baba persuaded and pushed him on and on, patting him on the back with his hand and at times even directing him when, in a dejected mood, the driver

would miss the track. So it went on for two more days, after which they came in sight of their destination—the town of Duzdab, which was to be their abode for three days—three days of fresh trouble to come!

The driver could not believe his eyes when he saw in the distance the outlines of the town of Duzdab. He had crossed the desert for years, and even under the best conditions had never completed the journey in less than five complete days. Sometimes it had taken him from ten to twelve days. No wonder he felt surprised when he sighted Duzdab after three days' journey. For at times during the journey he was afraid he had lost the way, as he could not clearly distinguish the road and surroundings.

Duzdab is the frontier station on the border of the territories of the Persian and British Governments. Another chapter of troubles was enacted here in connection with their passports. Baba warned them from the moment they arrived that it would take much time to get the visas, and hence told them to make all haste; otherwise, he said, if detained now and they missed the next train, they would not be allowed to cross the frontier and would be detained in Persia, perhaps for months. There were two trains only, on Thursday and Sunday every week, leaving Duzdab for Quetta, the British frontier station in Baluchistan. They had arrived in Duzdab on Wednesday afternoon, so it seemed impossible to go by the train leaving the next morning at ten, as to get the visas took several days, after stringent cross-questionings and inquiries into references. The composition of the party was cosmopolitan; six Persians and five British Indians (two Parsees, two Hindus, and one Mahommedan). The Persian members of the party thought that to obtain both visas from the Persian and British Consulates would be managed easily and that there would be no trouble. But Baba repeatedly

warned them that he knew there would be much trouble and delay in obtaining these visas, hence they should make all possible haste and let not a moment be wasted. "We must leave here by the train on Sunday," he said. They soon found that all their haste could not stir the Persian Consulate office to act quickly, and it was on Saturday noon, after three days, that they got their visas! But they had still to cope with the difficult task of getting the visas from the British Consulate, whose office closed at 1 p.m. on Saturday. It seemed hopeless to expect to pass through the process of cross-examination of over a dozen men within an hour. But Baba expects the impossible. They knew it, and that is why two of them—Afsari and Chanji—started for the British Consulate, believing that they had Baba's help.

The officer's questions and the evasive replies they felt bound to give him to avoid declaring Baba's identity, their hesitation in disclosing Baba's real name and the details of the occupations of the members of the party, and their object in touring like tramps (as it appeared to him), tended to make him suspicious. He became exceedingly exacting, and as he did so the more rigidly did Baba insist on it being done, even sending the two men to the officer's private residence after the office was closed, not once but three times within a few hours. Why the officer endured this badgering and did not throw them out they could not imagine. They hesitated, in spite of Baba's order, to go to the house the *fourth* time at the hour of nine in the evening. It was then that Baba provided a proof of their incapability to serve him, and he took them to task in spite of the devotion they had displayed. It was not, they thought, a question of duty to be performed as he wished it; the difference of opinion was about following his instructions to the letter or doing the same duty in the way of the world. Their preference for the way of the world was

due to the desire that Baba's identity should not be disclosed and his name brought into disrepute, which they were afraid might happen. While they hesitated to go to the British Consul for the fourth time with the message that Baba wanted to convey to him, Baba was plainly unhappy. Then there appeared at the door a Persian who wished to see Baba. He was the only one whom Baba met on this occasion in Duzdab. He was kept waiting, as Baba wished to see no one. But the man said he wanted to see Baba on a very urgent matter. He was then taken to Baba, and the following conversation took place: "What brings you here now?" was Baba's first question to him. "I bring a letter for you, sir." "A letter for me?" "Not exactly for you, sir, but addressed to the British Consul on your behalf." "Who brought it?" "Your devoted slave, sir." "From?" "The Governor of Duzdab." "What about?" asked Baba. "To allow you and your party to pass across the frontier without hindrance by the to-morrow morning train." "Shabash! [Well done!]" said Baba, and beckoning him to come near patted him on the shoulder and laid his hand on the head which was bent before him.

A profound silence prevailed for a few minutes, none uttering a word but everyone feeling the tense atmosphere. The man had indeed worked wonderfully! He was an "outsider," while they, members of his Mandali, could do so little. They felt the sting! Baba threw a significant glance at them all, and after a moment's pause his fingers ran on the blackboard, to say:

Here is a typical example of what love can do. Look at this man. He is a poor merchant in this place, with no great influence in Government circles, and yet he managed to approach the highest Government official here, the Governor himself, and persuaded him to write a letter to the British Consul to allow us to pass unhindered. This is no small work and service! And all

this he did unasked and of his own accord and without even telling us a word about it. Such service, so selflessly and spontaneously done, with no hopes of a reward except my blessing, must succeed, and he did succeed. Why?—because of the love which inspired him to do it, and for the sake of the love he put into it to make it a success. I am glad. He deserves my blessing. He is blessed. And now look at these two who have lived with me for years, they hesitated and thought a thousand thoughts and plans as to *how* to do it best! All right now, you two, give up your worrying, and go with this man to the British Consul and give him the letter.

They acted accordingly, went all the way in the biting cold, which made them shiver to the bones, unaccustomed as they were to the climate, and returned after delivering the letter. After a restless night they got up at four in the morning and started packing in preparation to go to the station, as they were ordered to do the night before by Baba, and to wait there for the visas rather than to wait in the rest-house and make a rush at the last moment. They were to call at the office at 8 a.m., when, the Consul had said, he would give his final reply after thinking over the matter during the night. They went and waited at the entrance from seven-thirty in the cold wind.

Baba's plan had worked. The Consul had been offended at their importunity, but the four visits to his house and the explanations they gave him, as instructed by Baba, had the desired effect, and he considered their case to be a special one. Although he could not ignore the Governor's letter, they feared it might offend him rather than persuade him, and they saw that he did feel a bit annoyed, probably disliking the dictatorial tone of the Governor's letter. He came to the office at eight o'clock (on Sunday, which was unusual), sat down at his table, resting his head in his hands as if in a dilemma, not knowing what to do. Here was a request made

by a party of over a dozen men of different classes (a party of ascetics, as he believed) desiring to cross over the Persian frontier into British India. If he made a mistake and this party were proved to be political agitators, communists in disguise (and communists were rampant then), how could he explain what he had done? So he was eventually informed of Baba's identity as a Master and of the others as his disciples, and he felt he could not detain them any longer for further inquiries. He took the risk, and after a few minutes' deliberation, sitting in the same position with his head in his hands, he called for his clerk and instructed him to prepare the visas and get them signed by him immediately, so that they might proceed by the train leaving in an hour. When they bade him good-bye he answered in a very low voice without raising his head. And again, when he was thanked for the special consideration he had given to their request, he replied shortly, "It is all right," and went away immediately. Six months later, when Chanji happened to go to the British Consulate at Bombay about the passport of one of Baba's Mandali, the first question he was asked was: "Has your Master returned to India?" And when he replied: "Yes, six months ago," the question was asked, "Then he has started signing, which he refused to do before?" "No!" "I cannot believe that!" exclaimed the official. "Why, he could not have entered British territory without a visa from a British Consul!" And the visa could not be had until Baba signed the application himself, which he had refused to do, which was why he was not given a British passport to travel to Persia. The officer was astonished. "He is a Master!" was the reply Chanji gave him, but he could not believe what was said. After a moment he added, "From what port did he leave Persia?" "He came by the land route via Duzdab," Chanji replied. The officer could not believe his ears. Then he smiled slowly and began nodding

his head, as if he had unravelled a mystery. "Oh, I see! He came via Duzdab! I believe now that he *is* a Master, and *Perfect* too! . . ." This officer knew much about Baba, being acquainted in his official capacity with much information about Baba's activities. This "incident" seemed to convince him. He was the only Government official in the Bombay Presidency who was conversant with Baba's passport before going to Persia, and knew well how difficult it was for Baba to enter into India again or any British territory without a visa from the British Consulate in Persia. And at all ports in Persia the Consulate officers had been informed. But Baba no doubt knew it. That is why he preferred the difficult land route and avoided the three main ports of Persia.

MANY TOURS

After his return from Persia, Baba made Nasik his headquarters for a time, then returned to Meherabad. He there gave permission to his disciples to resume the arti ceremony, which they performed daily, unless there were reasons to the contrary, in 1927 and until the end of October 1928, when Baba declared that he did not wish it any more. The ceremony took place at six o'clock in the morning or in the evening.

On October 29th Sadhu Christian Leik, who had joined Baba's ashram a little more than a year before, died at Meherabad in his fifty-ninth year. He had been ordered by Baba in the previous April, prior to the visit to Panchgani, to travel throughout India as an itinerant monk, resuming an earlier practice; everywhere he went he had spoken about his Master. He returned on October 21st, emaciated and ill, and died eight days later, his heart "filled with boundless joy."

In December Baba and a few of his disciples paid a visit to Bombay, seeing various people, and at the end of the

month he went to Ahmednagar and Arangaon, afterwards visiting Jahwar.

The thirty-sixth birthday of Baba in February 1930 was celebrated at Nasik, there being a large attendance of Hindu, Parsee, Mahommedan, and Christian devotees from an early hour. From nine to ten-thirty the devotees washed Baba's feet, then he was presented with sweetmeats and flowers; at eleven-thirty there was a speech given in his honour; afterwards the arti ceremony was performed, followed by the distribution of sweetmeats. The celebrations continued until the evening.

At the end of February Baba left Nasik for South India with a party of fourteen to visit Poona, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Dharwar, and Hubli. The visit to Madras was with the object of opening on March 2nd the Meher Ashram at Madras-Saidapet, and to meet the group of devotees in the south. He stayed one day visiting many people and institutions, and attended a large public meeting. Afterwards Baba went to the Nilgris via Mysore, visiting Bijapur en route, and returned to Nasik on March 12th. Towards the end of March Baba visited Sholapur to attend the marriage of a son of one of his devotees, and at the beginning of April he visited his old colony of Meherabad at Arangaon, staying there for six days, afterwards visiting Kolhapur and other places.

In June Baba went to Kashmir again, privately this time, by train, and, save for intermittent returns to Nasik, the rest of the year was spent in visits to many places where stays of a few days were made. On November 22nd an English journalist paid a visit to Baba at Arangaon for two days. He then went for a tour accompanied by Swami Prajunanda, an Englishman, and during the first part by Baba's younger brother, Jalbhoy Irani. Baba returned to Nasik, and at the end of the month went to Delhi, where his health broke

down, returning to Ahmednagar on December 23rd, and to Nasik on December 30th.

The December 1930 number of the *Meher Message* contained the following editorial statement:

HIS DIVINE MAJESTY

> The use of this phrase has caused so much unnecessary heart-burnings and has given needless offence to so many persons that we have decided to drop it from our next number . . . at least for some time.

It appears from the pages of the magazine that controversy had been developing between the editor and other disciples of Baba at the activities of the editor in connection with Indian politics, which had been objected to as Baba and his disciples take no part in politics.

PART II

THE PERIOD OF WORLD TRAVEL

THERE opens a new period. Hitherto, except for visits to Persia, Baba had not gone outside India. He was now about to enter upon a period of travels round the world, which marks the second stage of his activities. In the course of these journeys, of which I propose to give an account, Baba authorized a number of "messages," which were written by disciples on "outlines" provided by him on his speaking board: specimens of these messages will be found in these pages. I also propose to quote verbatim from the diaries of those who were with him on certain of these journeys, for they have the value of first-hand records.

The English journalist referred to at the end of the First Part of this book returned to Nasik and stayed until February 8, 1931.[1]

A VISIT TO PERSIA

At the end of March 1931, according to my notes, Baba went to the Himalayas, and in May went again to Persia. This visit was private, and only a few people saw him. He attended a place of holy pilgrimage to which people from all parts came to pay homage to Imam, one of the twelve apostles of the Prophet. One day at this place Baba was walking with three of his disciples when they were followed by two women.

[1] He was H. Raphael Hurst. An account of his visit to Baba is given in *A Search in Secret India*, by "Paul Brunton." (Rider & Co., n.d. The book was published in 1933.) Mr. Hurst was in search of signs and wonders. He found none in Baba, but "many high and sublime sayings," and was disappointed.

When they returned to the house Baba asked the women, who were prostitutes, to enter. He then took off the covering he had over his head and made them sit near him while he talked to them of spiritual things and occasionally caressed their faces. The women cried and said they would no longer do what they were accustomed to do. Then they went away.

FIRST VISIT TO THE WEST, 1931

On September 1st, Baba sailed from Karachi on the *Rajputana* with three of his disciples for England. On the *Rajputana* there was also travelling Mahatma Gandhi on his way to the Indian Round Table Conference. Baba and Ghandi encountered each other on one or two occasions, but there was no particular talk upon politics, though such subjects as the Vedanta, spirituality, etc., were discussed.[1] Baba kept almost entirely to his own cabin during the voyage. He was met at Marseilles on September 11th by two English friends and went by train to Paris, arriving in London the following day, staying the night at a house in Kensington. He then went to stay in Devonshire. There he remained for ten days, afterwards returning to London, where a number of people were brought to see him. One of them wrote at the time as follows:

I met Shri Meher Baba for the first time on a Saturday night at a performance of *White Horse Inn* at the Coliseum, about September 26, 1931: in the box were Baba, three of his Indian disciples, and four English people.

I sat next to Baba, but he took very little notice of me. I was shy and nervous, and felt as if someone had taken a hammer and

[1] Too much was made of this meeting by the Press, though the encounter had its own significance. It is referred to in the interview reported on page 162 following.

knocked me on the head. I hardly looked at him, I heard people talking but felt dazed and far away; at the end I put out my hand and took his and looked mutely at him; he nodded his head and I was told that I was to come the next day to Kensington. During that week I went about like one in a dream; I was stunned with the wonder of Baba, nothing else existed for me. I saw him every day, and from then I had absolute and implicit trust and faith in him; I asked no questions, I wanted nothing from him. I gave my life into his keeping and knew my search was at an end. I took my mother, my brother, and my younger sister to see him; they were impressed, and my sister felt specially drawn to him and also became one of his followers.

A number of journalists and others also saw Baba, and reports of interviews, mostly sensational in character, appeared in various newspapers. Baba went to a Promenade Concert, to several theatres, to the Zoological Gardens, to several museums, and to the Unknown Warrior's grave at Westminster Abbey.

On October 2nd Baba left England for Constantinople, where he stayed for nine days, thence he went to Milan and sailed to America from Genoa on the *Roma* for New York. A strange incident occurred on the *Roma* before landing. The immigration officer, being dissatisfied with the replies given by the English disciple who was acting for the party, detained Baba and the rest for further scrutiny for about two hours. He seemed to suspect that there was something suspicious about the "silence" and the alphabet board Baba used. He even tried to read the alphabet board himself, until he got tired and disgusted. He then remarked: "You," pointing to Baba, "come to America to teach our people with this board. . . . How foolish! . . . Who gave you the idea?" And he insisted that someone in New York should stand surety.

As this was a private visit, nobody knew of Baba's coming

except two or three people who had come to the docks to receive him; they were unfortunately held up at the gangway and not allowed to go aboard. It was a peculiar situation; but Baba was serenely calm, and meekly submitted to all he was made to go through.

Then an officer apparently belonging to the ship appeared and asked the immigration officer why the party was detained when everyone else had landed. The immigration officer explained that he was not satisfied with their papers and replies. "What's wrong with them?" asked the ship's officer. "These people seem to be quite respectable. What's the idea in detaining them?" "I am not satisfied and want a guarantee on their behalf," said the immigration officer, who was offended at the interference. "I don't see any reason for your behaviour," said the ship's officer. "I want you to permit them to land immediately."

Irritated at his tone, the immigration officer retorted, "But there is no one to guarantee who they are."

"Well, they must have some references."

The members of the party explained that they had very good references.

"There you are. They have references!" And then he said in an authoritative tone, "If you still want a guarantee, I stand guarantee." The officer continued, "I am just coming, and I want you to finish the permits for them to land by then." His commanding tone led the party to believe that he was someone of importance; anyhow, his words had immediate effect. The immigration officer sat down at his table, murmuring all the while, made out the landing cards, and they were permitted to go. Chanji, who tells the story, went in search of the officer who had helped them to thank him, but he says that he could not be found, and who he was remains a mystery.

Baba stayed in America for one month, three weeks at Harmon on the Hudson River and one week in New York City, paying a visit of one day to Boston. While at Harmon he went to the prison of Sing Sing; it was in the evening, and the car stopped outside the main entrance. Baba said to those with him, "I will show you how I work," and after a pause added, "In this prison there is a man who is my agent; he does good work for me; I shall free him when I speak." He left America on the *Bremen* on December 6th, and arrived in Paris on the 11th, leaving Marseilles for India on the 18th by the *Narkunda*. He arrived at Bombay on January 2nd, where he was met by a large number of devotees.

Baba's method at the interviews in England and America was almost invariably the same with all who came to him. He would sit in a room with one or more of his Indian disciples with the alphabet board on his knees. A disciple would tell Baba the name of the person, whom Baba would then motion to sit near him. He would look at the visitor and smile. He would ask no questions. Usually he touched the hand or caressed the arm of the visitor, saying on his board, which was read by the disciple, "I like you and will help you." If the visitor had nothing to say, which was frequently so, the interview would end in a minute or two with a smile from Baba. If the visitor had any questions to ask, Baba would answer them on the board. Interviews seldom lasted more than from three to five minutes. Baba usually got up at six o'clock, had breakfast at seven-thirty, and was ready for visitors from nine o'clock. In the evenings he would listen to music or play games, and occasionally he would ask one or other of the company, "Are you happy?"

THE "MEHER MESSAGE"

The July–August–September number of the *Meher Message*, issued when Baba was in Europe, appeared with the announcement that from January 1932 the name of the magazine would be the *Mystic Review*. In "My Heart-to-Heart Talk" the editor said that he had been "face to face with great difficulties," and confessed that "if he had made mistakes, he had done so honestly; in his editorial notes he said, "Beware of pseudo-sadgurus!" No reference was made to Baba in the magazine, though an article on "Spirit Life" was published as "By Meher Baba," without the usual prefix, adopted by the editor, of "His Holiness" or "Shri." In the October number the editor declared in another "My Heart-to-Heart Talk" that with great pain he now considered Meher Baba "to be a charlatan." He said that he had begun to be suspicious in April of the previous year, and in April of this year "I came to the conclusion that Meher Baba was not real, and all his talk of manifesting himself as an Avatar was bunkum." He went on to say, "I still love Meher Baba," but apologized to the critics of Baba for having denounced them. He continued:

But while I express my sorrow to them for the injustice that I unconsciously did to them, I must make it clear that some of the statements they made against Meher Baba were entirely groundless and false. For example, it was stated that Meher Baba was in the habit of privately speaking by word of mouth with certain female disciples, that he extorted money from his disciples and made a wrong use of it, and that the boys of his Ashram did not receive good secular training and were not well taken care of. All these statements are entirely false. Meher Baba has always been true to his vow of silence. Regarding money, I am bound to assert that every pie that was given to him was given entirely voluntarily by his disciples, and that on the whole he made very good use of all the money given to him. As regards boys—Meherashram boys—I



SHRI MEHER BABA IN ENGLAND, 1932

must say that they were given good secular training and their parents would not have taken better care of them than Meher Baba did. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same of the treatment of Premashram boys. I now firmly hold that Meher was not justified in performing the "spiritual" experiment upon them.

The November number of the *Meher Message* contained a "Heart-to-Heart Talk" in which the editor wrote about learning by mistakes, and said:

> Talk to me of many things, my dear readers, but for heaven's sake, for God's sake, don't talk to me of the necessity of blind faith.

The only reference to Baba was in a short paragraph in which the editor said that:

> I am now positively certain that my friend, Meher Baba, never enjoyed or does not enjoy the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

I record this incident because this magazine was associated with Baba, and the behaviour of the editor seems to require some accounting for; the explanation is the simple one of the defection of a disciple, an experience which all who have disciples know, and a subject on which I shall have more to say later. The significant thing is that Baba remained unconcerned. He had allowed the editor to do what he pleased, as he always does, and having expressed his own wishes he left the matter to the one concerned. Baba can sometimes be persuaded to do what he does not wish to do to please a disciple, but the results are never what the disciple expects, and if a disciple wishes greatly to follow a particular course of action, Baba usually does not stand in the way. This, indeed, forms an important element in his method of training.

FIRST WORLD TOUR, 1932

On January 16, 1932, Baba left Bombay for Nasik.

A seoond visit was arranged to the West at the invitation of some of his English followers, and Baba left India on March 24th by the *Conte Rosso*, accompanied by six Indian disciples, including his two brothers Behram and Adi, arriving at Venice on April 4th, where he was met, reaching Dover two days later, whence he was taken by car to a private house at Kensington. There, every day from nine o'clock onwards, people came to see him, and he allowed a film company to take him "speaking" from his alphabet board.

Baba went to the country house of one of his English friends, and visited Kew Gardens, the British Museum, and a number of theatres and cinemas. A children's party was arranged at the house, and occasionally in the evenings there was music. Many Press representatives came for interviews. The following is a journalist's account of a talk with Baba:

Baba's interview with James Douglas, published in the *Sunday Express*, April 10, 1932.

I had prepared a questionnaire with the help of Sir Denison Ross, the Oriental scholar. It was designed to trap the teacher, but he smilingly threaded his way through it without stumbling. His mastery of dialectic is consummate. It was quite Socratic in its ease.

He frequently put questions to me which startled me by their penetration. But he never evaded a direct question. His simplicity is very subtle.

"I am a Persian," he said. "I was born in Poona, but my father and mother were Persians."

He is above races and religions. He is universal. He is one with God, and God is everywhere in everyone.

"Do you know Gandhi?" I asked.

"Yes. I met him in the steamship *Rajputana*. He is not as far advanced as I am. He asked me to help him. But I will not help him until he abandons politics. I have no politics."[1]

"Are you a Mahatma?" I asked. He smiled.

"What is a Mahatma?" he replied. "I know the truth. You live in London. You know it, I know."

"Are you divine?" He smiled.

"I am one with God. I live in Him, like Buddha, like Christ, like Krishna. They know Him as I know Him. All men can know Him."

"Have you solved the problem of evil?"

"There is no evil," he said. "There are only degrees of good."

"The world is perplexed with disaster. Is there any way out of the world crisis?"

"Yes."

"How long will it last?"

"Only another year. Then there will be recovery and deliverance."

"Christ's mission was accomplished in three years. How long will your mission last?"

"Thirty-three years," he replied.

"What is your secret?" I asked.

"The elimination of the ego," he replied.

Then I put my questionnaire.

"Have you a Scripture, a Bible, a Koran, an inspired book?"

"No, I teach. I am a teacher."[2]

"Do you believe in Buddha and the Eight-Fold Path?"

"Yes. All religion is ascent by stages of perfect union with God."

"What God do you believe in?"

"There is only one God for all men."

"What religion is nearest to yours?"

"All religions are revelations of God."

"Is there a future life?"

[1] I am told that Baba's actual words were: "I saw him on the steamer *Rajputana*. He is a good man and a great soul. I will not help him until he abandons politics. I have no politics."

[2] Baba's actual words were "I awaken."

"Yes. The soul does not die. It goes on from life to life till it is merged in God."

"Nirvana?"

"Yes. But not loss of the self."

"Does the self survive?"

"Yes. But it is merged in God. The soul is not the brain. It functions the brain. The brain is its instrument."

"Who has sent you to save mankind?"

"I know. It is my whole life. My ecstasy is continuous. It is unbroken."

"Do you sleep much?"

The Sadguru smiled. He held up three fingers.

"Three hours," said the interpreter.

"Are you married?" He smiled in wonder.

"Sex for me does not exist."

"Is God a Person or a Power?"

"God is both personal and impersonal. He is in art, in literature, everything."

"Are you a Pantheist?"

"No," he smiled. "When you know God it is plain. The Self is one with Him at the height of experience."

"Why am I not happy?"

"You have not grown out of self," he smiled.

He had said he would give me a minute, but the minute lasted an hour.

"You are lucky," said a disciple. "He likes you. . . ."

He is serenely certain that he can redeem mankind.

I wonder.

The following are extracts from Baba's interview with a Special Correspondent published in the *Daily Mirror*, April 9, 1932:

What was his message for the English people? I wanted to know. And very swiftly the finger moved again. He was spelling in English, but with short cuts and abbreviations that only the swift and practised eyes of his disciples could follow.

The Western world, Baba thought, tended to concentrate too much upon materialism. Materialism was not an altogether bad feature of Western life. It was, indeed, valuable in the development of our lives.

But he wishes to lead the West towards spiritual truths, without churches or creeds, to a realization of the possibilities of the spirit that might become a part of our everyday life.

Asked when he would be able to give his message publicly to the world, Baba told me that he would be going within a month to America, where it was possible that within two or three months' time he might break his silence.

"What do you teach your inquirers?" I asked.

"According to their individual needs. But when I speak to the whole world, then my teachings will be universal."

He said that he had no interest in the political affairs of India, and asked me to correct the statement that he was the spiritual adviser of Gandhi.

"Gandhi met me on the liner *Rajputana* and we talked of spiritual experiences. Gandhi was interested, and said that he would like to meet me in America. I said that he could come to me after he had finished with his political work," was Baba's explanation.

"You mean that you do not think politics and the spiritual life have much to do with each other?"

"Not directly," replied Baba. "But eventually, of course, the spiritual experience becomes universal and includes the political affairs of the world."

He wanted all the nations to be brought together, he did not wish to work for India alone.

A statement of Baba's "message" was also made; it reads as follows:

Message of Shri Meher Baba

I am not come to establish any cult, society, or organization—nor even to establish a new religion. The Religion I shall give teaches the knowledge of the one behind the many.

The Book which I shall make people read is the book of the heart, which holds the key to the mystery of life. As for ritual, I shall teach humanity to discriminate, express, and live rather than utter it. I shall bring about a happy blending of the head and the heart.

Societies and organizations have never succeeded in bringing truth nearer. Realization of Truth is solely the concern of the individual.

Every being is a point from which a start could be made towards the limitless ocean of Love, Bliss, Knowledge, and Goodness already within him. No spiritual Master brings religion to the world in the form which it eventually assumes. His very presence is a blessing and radiates spirituality. He imparts it to others by personal contact. The so-called religions are an effort to commemorate the association with a great spiritual Master, and to preserve his atmosphere and influence. It is like an archaeologist trying to preserve things which only resuscitate the past. The living spirit being absent, religions or organizations gradually lose their glamour. The result is a mental revolt against the established order. Something more substantial and practical is required, which expresses the life of the spirit. There exists at the moment a universal dissatisfaction and an indescribable longing for something that will end the chaos and misery that is holding the world in its grip. I will satisfy this craving and lead the world to real happiness and peace by making people look more deeply into things than hitherto.

As a rule Masters help individually according to the temperament and fitness of the aspirant, but this being an Avataric period, which means the end of the previous cycle and the beginning of a new one, my spiritual help to humanity will be both individual and collective.

The period of junction of the old and new cycle usually connotes the advent of a Master who rejuvenates religious thought, infusing new life and meaning into the old order of things.

Besides imparting the highest state of spirituality to a select few he gives a general spiritual push to the whole world.

The West looks at things only from the standpoint of reason or logic and is sceptical about things which baffle the intellect.

Intellect is the lowest form of understanding and is developed by reading, hearing, reasoning, and logic. These processes create an illusion of real knowledge.

The highest state of understanding is permanent illumination through which one experiences and sees things as they are. In this state one feels in harmony with everyone and everything, and realizes divinity in every phase of life, and is able to impart happiness to others. Here one attends to all duties and material affairs, and yet feels mentally detached from the world. This is true renunciation—the last and highest state of understanding is the merging of the soul into the limitless ocean of infinite Bliss, Knowledge, and Power. One who has himself attained this freedom can make thousands perfect like himself. I intend bringing about a great spiritual revival in the near future, utilizing the tremendous amount of energy possessed by America for the purpose. Such a spiritual outpouring as I visualize usually takes place at the beginning or end of a cycle, and only a perfect one who has reached the Christ state of Consciousness can make such a universal appeal. My work will embrace everything—it will permeate every phase of life. Perfection would fall far short of the ideal if it were to accept one thing and eschew another. The general spiritual push that I shall give to the whole world will automatically adjust problems such as politics, economics, and sex, though these are not directly connected with the original theme. New values and significance will be attached to things which appear to baffle solution at the moment.

The benefits that shall accrue to different nations and countries when I bring about the spiritual upheaval will be largely determined by the amount of energy each one possesses. The greater the energy—however misapplied—the greater the response.

The Master merely diverts the current into the right channel. It will be one of my greatest miracles to bring together and blend the realistic West with the idealistic East, and the West at the

zenith of its material and intellectual attainment and the East at the height of its spiritual manifestation in the shape of a Perfect Master will meet without shaming or looking down upon each other. I repeat—materialism and spirituality must go hand in hand. The balance of head and heart must be maintained. The Head for discrimination—the Heart for feeling, whereby it is possible to realize infinite consciousness in Art, Science, Nature, and in every phase of life.

I have become one with the infinite source of everything. This is the state of Christ consciousness. If people call me Messiah, Saviour, or Redeemer it does not affect me. Terms and names do not matter in the state of Christ consciousness that I eternally enjoy and towards which I shall lead all who come to me. When I speak my original message will be delivered to the world and it will have to be accepted.

The ability to perform miracles does not necessarily connote high spirituality. Anyone who has reached the Christ consciousness can perform them.

People must not come to me merely for help in their physical infirmities or for material purposes. I shall perform miracles when the time and situation demand and not to satisfy mere idle curiosity. Spiritual healing is by far the greatest healing, and this is what I intend to give. The highest is latent in everyone, but has to be manifest.

On April 17th Baba went by car to Devonshire, returning to London on the 24th. He at once left for Switzerland with a few disciples. In Lugano Baba gave a hint to the party, intended especially for his Western devotees, that one of his ways of working was to welcome, invite, or even to create "opposition." He explained that opposition helped rather than hindered his work, and at times he actually created opposition, if it was not naturally aroused, for certain work. He added that such an occasion was coming soon, when many of his devotees would be shocked. About a week later letters

were received from England to say that a defamatory article had been published in a London paper about Baba, and that his friends had written replies to the editor of the paper repudiating what had been said. Baba immediately ordered all further action to cease; for, he said, it was no fault to say things against him. The opposition was desired. He stayed at Lugano until May 7th, when he left for Paris, afterwards returning to London on May 10th, where he stayed four days, leaving Southampton on the 19th by the *Bremen* for New York, travelling second class.

While he was at Lugano Baba's father died.

Baba arrived in New York amid a blare of publicity, and stayed for four days at the house of an American friend. During that time he gave a message, prepared for him by one of his English disciples, which read as follows:

I am so very pleased to see you again. Among you are many of the first Americans I met last time I was here, so I regard you as old friends.

No doubt some of you have seen various newspaper reports about myself and my work. . . . Many of these are misleading. But it is not to be wondered at if journalists do not understand my work or if they pander to the desire for sensation.

I do not intend to found any religion, cult, creed, or society. There are already far too many of these organizations. I have come to help people realize their ideals in daily life. The widespread dissatisfaction in modern life is due to the gulf between theory and practice, between the ideal and its realization on earth. The spiritual and material aspects of life are widely separated instead of being closely united. There is no fundamental opposition between spirit and matter, or, if you like, between life and form. The apparent opposition is due to wrong thinking, to ignorance. Hence the remedy lies in the continuous practice of right thinking, in permanent illumination resulting from the balance between head and heart. This is the illumination which I intend to give.

The greatest mystics have realized through personal experience that God alone is real and that everything is God. This means that, though you may not be aware of it, the Highest is latent in each one of you. But in order for it to be lived and experienced in consciousness, it must be manifested.

Intellectual conviction of this truth is not enough. True knowledge consists in illumination which finally culminates in Union with the ultimate Reality. This last is the state of Christ Consciousness, which is my permanent condition.

The obstacles to illumination are certain mental tendencies and desires connected with egoism which in the East are called sanskaras. The sum-total of these desires and tendencies creates the illusion of a separate self at war with or isolated from other selves. Evolution or the fall into matter made the creation of such a separate self necessary—otherwise spiritual consciousness could never be attained in the flesh.

In the beginning, before evolution began, we were united with the source of all, but unconsciously, as the fish lives in the sea without being aware of the sea, because it has never left it. Evolution involved a separation from the Source of All and a consequent conscious longing to return to it, through a succession of lives and forms.

The conscious return to the Source during physical incarnation only became possible when consciousness became equilibrated in gross matter.

America represents the vanguard and synthesis of the white races, and hence forms the best foundation for the spiritual upheaval I will bring about in the near future.

America has tremendous energy, but most of this energy is misdirected. I intend to divert it into spiritual and creative channels.

I am now going to California for a few days. From there I must go to the Far East for one day for spiritual reasons, but I will be back in California by the end of June and I will speak on June 29th. But if I should be delayed, I will return on July 12th and I will speak on July 13th.

When I speak there will be many proofs of my spiritual power and of my ability to bestow illumination. People will then realize that Truth, which is the Source of all love and existence, rules supreme in all departments of life.

My work and aims are intensely practical. It is not practical to over-emphasize the material at the cost of the spiritual. It is not practical to have spiritual ideals without putting them into practice. But to realize the ideal in daily life, to give beautiful and adequate form to the living spirit, to make Brotherhood a fact, not merely a theory, as at present—this is being practical in the truest sense of the world.

My work will arouse great enthusiasm and a certain amount of opposition.—That is inevitable. But spiritual work is strengthened by opposition, and so it will be with mine. It is like shooting an arrow from a bow—the more you pull the bow-string towards you, the swifter the arrow speeds to its goal.

After an extremely busy time, when he saw people all day long and was present at a large reception in his honour, Baba went to Harmon, then in four days to Chicago, and so to Hollywood, where he remained for six days, seeing many people, including a number of film stars, the visit being a "meteoric advent that crashed the front-page headlines of every paper in the land." At the Paramount studios Baba was received by some of the directors and shown the place at work. On one of the sets Tallulah Bankhead, Gary Cooper, and Charles Laughton were playing, and one of Baba's disciples who had known Miss Bankhead and Mr. Laughton in London introduced them to him. They then visited the Metro-Goldwyn and Fox studios. That evening Miss Bankhead visited Baba, and the next day Baba attended a reception given in his honour by Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Mary had a "talk" with Baba for about forty minutes, while others of the gathering listened with interest. The next day

he visited the Paramount studios again and met Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette Macdonald, who were working on *Love Me To-night*, and von Stomberg and Marlene Dietrich, then playing in *The Blonde Venus*. Marlene Dietrich was off-hand, but von Stomberg got on well with Baba. That afternoon he had tea with Ernst Lubitsch, and in the evening there was a reception of about a thousand people.

The following messages to America were issued on Baba's behalf while in Hollywood:

Shri Meher Baba's Message to California

So much has been said and written about the "Highest Consciousness" and God Realization, that people are bewildered as to the right process and immediate possibility of attainment. The philosophical mind wading laboriously through much literature only ends by learning a few intellectual gymnastics. The highest state of consciousness is latent in all. The son of God is in every man, but requires to be manifested. The method of attaining this consciousness must be practical, and must be adapted to the existing mental and material conditions of the world.

Rituals and ceremonies instituted by the priest-ridden churches have made the process of attainment too dry, and that accounts for the lack of interest felt all over the world for religious things in general. India, in spite of the high state of Spirituality at the present moment, is very caste-ridden because of the enforcement by the various cults of a plethora of rituals and ceremonies, which maintain the form, but still kill the spirit. Forms and ceremonies instead of diminishing the ego strengthen it. The stronger the Ego, the more aggressive it becomes. In the anxiety to become conscious of a separate self, through thinking thoughts of "I am in the right," "I am the favoured one," "I have the right to live," one becomes destructive. The furious race for armaments by the Christian world, evincing an utter disregard for the commandment of Jesus, that

if one cheek is smitten to turn the other, shows clearly what I mean by the Ego. In the evolutionary ascent from the mineral, vegetable, and animal life, the latent mind gradually expands and develops till full consciousness is reached in the human form.

To create this very consciousness, the universe emanated from the Infinite ocean of knowledge and bliss, i.e. God the Absolute. In the human form, however, a difficulty is confronted to remove which Prophets and Spiritual Masters have periodically visited this earthly plane. Besides full consciousness in the human form, as a result of previous conditions of life, the Ego, the I, is evolved.

The Ego is composed of fulfilled and unfulfilled desires, and creates the illusion of feeling finite, weak, and unhappy. Henceforth the Soul can see only progres, through the gradual suppression of this finite Ego and the transformation into the Divine Ego, the One Infinite Self, but retains in full the consciousness of the human form. When man realizes this state of Divine Consciousness he finds himself in everyone and sees all phenomena as forms of his own real Self. The best and also the easiest way of overcoming the Ego and attaining the divine Consciousness is to develop Love and render selfless service to all humanity in whatever circumstances we may be placed. All ethics and religious practices lead to this. The more we live for others, and the less we live for ourselves, the more our lower desires are eliminated, and this in turn reacts upon the Ego, suppressing it and transforming it proportionately. The Ego persists to the end. Not till all six out of the seven principal stages on the path culminating in the Christ Consciousness are traversed is the Ego completely eliminated, to reappear again on the path as the Divine "I." This state of divine consciousness to which Jesus, when he said "I and my father are ONE" corresponds to the state of living in Infinite and the finite at the same time.

The above is the normal procedure for one who works on his own initiative without having come across a living Master. With the help of a Perfect Master the whole affair is greatly simplified.

Complete surrender to the Divine Will of the Perfect One,

and an unflinching readiness to carry out the orders rapidly, achieve a result not possible even by rigidly practising all the ethics of the world for a thousand years. The extraordinary results achieved by a Perfect Master are due to the fact that, being one with the Universal Mind, he is present in the mind of every human being and can therefore give just the particular help needed to awaken the highest Consciousness latent in every individual. Perfection, however, in order to achieve the greatest result on the material plane must have the human touch, and a keen sense of humour.

I eternally enjoy the Christ state of Consciousness, and when I speak, which I intend doing in the near future, I shall manifest my true self; besides giving general Spiritual push to the whole world, I shall lead all those who come to me towards the Light and the Truth. This, in short, is my mission in this world.

Shri Meher Baba's Message to Hollywood

Since arriving in America, I have been asked many times what solution have I brought for the social problems now confronting you—what did I have to offer that would solve the problems of unemployment, prohibition, crime—that would eliminate the strife between individuals and nations, and pour a healing balm of peace upon a troubled world.

The answer has been so simple that it has been difficult to grasp. I will elaborate it now, in order that it may be easily understood.

The root of all our difficulties, individual and social, is self-interest. It is this, for example, which causes corruptible politicians to accept bribes and betray the interests of those whom they have been elected to serve: which causes bootleggers to break, for their own profit, a law, designed, whether wisely or not, to help the nation as a whole: which causes people to connive, for their own pleasure, in the breaking of that law, thus causing disrespect for law in general, and increasing crime tremendously: which causes the exploitation of the great masses of humanity by individuals or

groups of individuals seeking personal gain: which impedes the progress of civilization by shelving inventions which would contribute to the welfare of humanity at large, simply because their use would mean the scrapping of present inferior equipment, which, when people are starving, causes the wanton destruction of large quantities of food, simply in order to maintain market prices: which causes the hoarding of large sums of gold, when the welfare of the world demands its circulation.

These are only a few examples of the way self-interest operates to the detriment of human welfare. Eliminate self-interest, and you will solve all your problems, individual and social.

But the elimination of self-interest, even granting a sincere desire on the part of the individual to accomplish it, is not so easy, and is never completely achieved except by the aid of a Perfect Master, who has the power to convey Truth at will. For self-interest springs from a false idea of the true nature of the Self, and this idea must be eradicated, and the Truth experienced, before the elimination of self-interest is possible.

I intend, when I speak, to reveal the One Supreme Self which is in all. This accomplished, the idea of the Self as a limited, separate entity will disappear, and with it will vanish self-interest. Co-operation will replace competition; certainty will replace fear; generosity will replace greed. Exploitation will disappear.

It has been asked why I have remained silent for seven years, communicating only by means of an alphabet-board, and why I intend to break my silence shortly, and it might be asked, in view of what has just been stated, what relation my speaking will have to the transformation of human consciousness, which has been predicated.

Humanity, as at present constituted, uses three vehicles for the expression of thought, and experiences three states of consciousness. These three vehicles are:

(1) The Mental Body, in which thoughts arise as the result of impressions from past experiences. These thoughts may remain latent in the mental body as seeds, or they may be expressed. If

they are expressed, they take first the form of desire, and pass first through

(2) the Subtle or the Desire Body, which is composed of the five psychic senses. They may rest there, as in the case of dreams or unfulfilled desire, or they may be further expressed in action through

(3) the Physical Body, with five physical senses.

The three states of consciousness corresponding to the three vehicles mentioned above are:

(1) Unconsciousness, as in deep, dreamless sleep;

(2) Subconsciousness, as in dreams, or obscure, unformed, and unfulfilled desires;

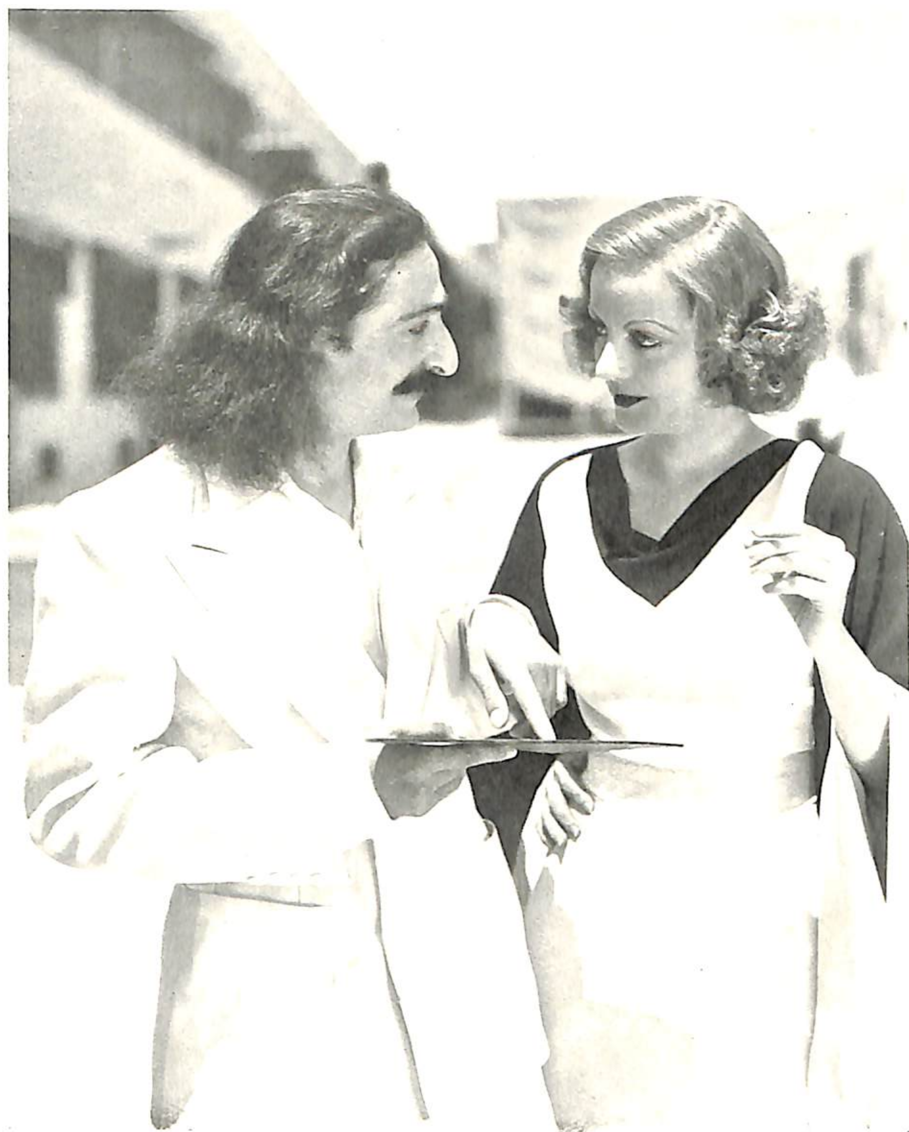
(3) Waking consciousness, as in active daily life.

The process by which thought passes from the mental through the subtle, into physical expression, may be called the expression of human will.

In order that thought may be expressed effectively, all three of the vehicles used in its expression must be perfectly clear, and the interaction between them must be harmonious. The head and the heart must be united; intellect and feeling must be balanced; material expression must be understood to be the fruit of spiritual realization.

The God-man neither thinks nor desires. Through him the Divine will flows inevitably into perfect manifestation, passing directly from the spiritual body, which in the ordinary human being is undeveloped, into physical expression. For him the Superconscious is the normal state of consciousness. From him there flows continuously infinite love and wisdom, infinite joy and peace and power.

When he speaks, Truth is more powerfully manifested than when he uses either sight or touch to convey it. For that reason Avatars usually observe a period of silence lasting for several years, breaking it to speak only when they wish to manifest the Truth to the entire universe. So, when I speak, I shall manifest the Divine Will, and world-wide transformation of consciousness will take place.



SHRI MEHER BABA AND TALLULAH BANKHEAD, HOLLYWOOD, 1932



Baba had said that he would speak at Hollywood, but on July 13th he said it was first necessary for him to visit China. He left by the *Monterey* for Honolulu on June 4th. Before leaving he was invited to see Marie Dressler at her house, where he stayed some time, and then gave numerous instructions to those of his American and English disciples who had accompanied him thus far and were told to return home. The stay at Honolulu was for two days, when Baba said that he did not intend to return to California and arranged for his English secretary to return to Los Angeles, and thence back to Europe. Baba sailed in the *Empress of Japan* to Shanghai, which was reached on June 22nd. At Shanghai Baba was met by an English disciple, who was at that time engaged as a Professor at Nanking University. Three months earlier five of Baba's Indian disciples had been sent to China to await his coming, as it was then expected that he would go there before visiting America. Baba arrived accompanied by his two brothers and two other Indians, tired after their long journeys. The following is an account of this visit:

Baba was dressed in a European suit and a panama hat. I had booked rooms in a hotel overlooking the Bund, the busy street and waterfront of the Whangpoo River.

Immediately we had had tea Baba said that he wished to go round the city and mix with the Chinese crowds. I had had very little experience of Baba's ways and was still rather awkward in his presence. I took them along the Bund, and from the French settlement by tram through the British, to the war-stricken districts near the North station, thinking it would interest them. Not at all. There were not enough people. We took a tram back and saw Nanking Road, the now brightly lit Chinese Stores, Chungking Road, Racecourse, along Tibet Road. The streets were densely packed with long-gowned clerks and short-coated coolies, endless rickshaw-pullers with cheerful faces and poverty-stricken appear-

ances beseeching us to ride not walk; the narrow streets were hung with paper lanterns and waving banners of Chinese characters. Baba was delighted as we threaded the narrow, perfumed alleys and the Chinese turned to stare at us in a not too friendly manner. Baba was delighted and liked them. I did not care to waste money, but I realized that I should have booked cars for them. After dinner we drove round the three cities—French, British, and the fringe of the Chinese city with its gay lights, restaurants, hotels, and haunts.

On Thursday, the 23rd, Baba saw some visitors. I had long been interested in Oriental philosophies, and I had become acquainted with some cultured Chinese with whom I discussed Buddhist problems and particularly meditation. Though language was a difficult obstacle we met and discussed fairly regularly, and I visited the nearest monastery in which their school of meditation was practised. Several came to see Baba and invited all of us to a Chinese banquet that evening. The rest of the day was for me very hectic. I had private work to do, and appointments to keep in connection with my official work. Then began a frantic tour of all the steamship agents in Shanghai, to book passages for eight or nine people to India and Europe. Until closing-time Chanji and I were harried off our feet trying to do the impossible. At 5 p.m. we two were in rickshaws returning along the Bund towards the hotel; I was exhausted and I said in vexation to Chanji that it was a pity that Baba did not know his own mind, and that I was tired of all this fussing. Baba did not seem to realize that I had to earn my living, and that my other appointments were both important and impossible to postpone. Much of the present shipping business seemed unnecessary.

I was called into Baba's room and ticked off by him. If I worried like this it was no use my working for him. That evening after dinner we walked behind the racecourse, then took rickshaws—seven in a row—and went to the Cathay cinema in French town about 9.30 p.m. We were due at the station at 11 p.m., and I was on tenter-hooks because I knew Baba would run it too close. We

motored to the station and arrived as the train was due out. The hotel porter was struggling with loads of unnecessary luggage as usual. Baba asked me if we could rush the train or not. I said "Yes." We tried, the boys struggled into the crowded second-class carriages, full of Chinese, sitting up all the night, three of us got into sleeping berths, and the capable porter squeezed in all our luggage as the train was moving. For me it was a horrid job.

Next morning (June 24th) we were met at Nanking by my servants. In my minute house we were nine persons. After breakfast I took Baba up the battlemented city wall, and there we walked along to the left. On the left at the foot of the sixty-foot wall was the great lake, to the right was the city, and ahead the Purple mountain.

In the afternoon a Frenchman whom we hoped would be interested came out with us and in his car and another hired car we motored up the mountain, then right across the hill-sides, finally jumping down the stony, slippery descent to the water temple, thence to the Sun Yat Sen memorial, and home by car. Baba loved the rough walking and led the way across country like a scout leader.

That evening we sat in Baba's room and listened to music.

Innumerable cables were received from Shanghai, America, Malay States, India, England and sent round the world. Several students and older Chinese came to see Baba. I had expected to travel with Baba to India; for till now I had seen little of him and I jumped at the opportunity of being with him for a month continuously. When we were discussing plans, however, I offered if he preferred it to go via Dairen, Manchuria, Siberia, Moscow, Warsaw, London. He wished this, and I was to be sent across Manchuria and Russia to meet Baba's boat when it arrived at Marseilles on July 20th.

On Sunday we went to the national cinema in the Chinese city, we also drove through the swarming Chinese lanes, so narrow that the car almost touched the walls on either side, the open shops that display a hundred handicrafts and trades, to the temple of

Confucius. The Chinese coming Buddha is called Milo Fu—I had in the house a statue in lacquer of this, which I gave to Baba.

We left by train for Shanghai. My servants all came to the station and asked to say good-bye to Baba. Baba left Shanghai on the *Kaiser-i-Hind*, and I sailed for Dairen six days later.

Thus Baba did not speak at Hollywood as he had promised, but sent a special message from Shanghai to his American disciples and friends, who found his change of plans difficult to understand.

Marseilles was reached on July 28th, thus making a second visit to Europe on the world tour, and the party went to Santa Margherita, Italy, where they were met by others from England and a holiday of three weeks was enjoyed in Baba's company. The following is an account of the holiday by one who took part in it:

These Italian days with Baba were very happy times. Warm sun, blue sea, a wonderful coast line, and behind the hotel green hills and shaded walks through vineyards and forests. In the morning we trooped down to the rocks, bathed, dived, splashed, or basked in the sun, Baba in our midst. Though he used to swim much in India, he had special reasons for not swimming then. He would paddle in the water, and twice allowed us to row him in a little boat while we swam around. Twice he went out in a sailing boat and also in a motor-boat to San Fruttuoso.

Baba's room led out on to a private balcony. When we swam before breakfast we would see his white-clad figure watching us from the balcony. Often at night we would sit there listening to music on the gramophone; Baba's favourites were Indian and Persian spiritual songs which he would explain to us, Spanish dances and Paul Robeson's negro spirituals. On the terrace we would act charades, or get up entertainments. Under the name of Thomas, Baba would also take dancing lessons with one of us who was a skilled dancing instructor. Thus, and in innumerable

ways, Baba entered into our lives as playmate, friend, child, and father. Actually he worked hard while outwardly playing.

Some nights we would watch his working; he would ask to play Loris, a card game, while or before he worked. The apparent holiday was interspersed with sudden conflicts of temperament, of jealousies, of difficult moods that temporarily obscured the sun. Many lessons were quietly and unobtrusively taught.

There were from eleven to thirteen of us in the party; we looked forward to days of rest and pleasure.

The second day Baba said that he had a great spiritual work to perform. A special cave, connected if possible with Saint Francis, was to be found at Assisi. There he would fast undisturbed for twenty-four hours. I was told to leave on the first of August to make arrangements.

It was my first stay in Italy and I was ignorant of the Italian language. I took a heavy rucksack because a mountain cave would be cold, and after a tiresome journey via Florence and Perugia, I arrived at 3.30 p.m. on August the second, at Assisi.

I felt like some travel-strained pilgrim; for many years I had studied and meditated on the life of Saint Francis. The rucksack like a heavy burden weighed on my back, but my heart was lightened by the object of my journey.

The station is in the valley and one and a half miles from the walled city. On the left flank is a massive stone fortress rising steeply from the plain supported on rows of tall stone arches. To the right rose the gaunt curve of Mount Subasio, meeting on the lower slopes the terraced houses, the many churches and towers built of a creamy or golden-coloured stone. Behind the long triangular-shaped town rises the castle-crowned spur (Rocca Maggiore). The fortress (I found later to be the basilica built by Fra Elias over the body of St. Francis) constitutes the westernmost point of the triangle. The city walls run eastwards and upwards, and widen to enclose at the eastern flank below the church of St. Clare, then the cathedral of St. Rufino, a college, and above in the angle of the city wall the smaller castle of Rocca

Minore. The eastern end of the city (the broad base of the triangle) has two gates pierced through the wall; one at the lower corner (Porta Nuova) leads to Sano Damiano and to Foligno, from the other (Porta Cappuccini) a road, bordered by terrace olive trees, climbs up Mount Subasio to the Carceri monastery, about four miles distant.

On my arrival I knew nothing about Assisi or the district. I discovered the names of buildings and places later.

I took a room. I visited the great church, found a Roman Catholic priest who could speak English, and explained that I wished to meditate in a cave associated with St. Francis. He seemed surprised and when he found that I was a Protestant could not see his way to help me.

Practically all the places known to be associated with St. Francis, and many apocryphal places, have been covered by churches, monasteries, and monuments. Like other places of pilgrimage, Assisi has been commercialized.

I had not foreseen this difficulty and was rather depressed.

Bearing in mind the plan of the city, I walked through its entire length until I came out of the Porta Nuova. I decided to cut across country and up the steep mountain slopes. It was already 5 p.m. I struck the Carceri road, it was steep and dusty and I was tired. I did not know of the monastery's existence.

The beautiful Umbrian landscape unfolded. To the right lay the valley of Spoleto. Cornfields, and the rows of gnarled olive trees were left behind, the mountain slopes became steeper and wilder. I looked for caves along the route and could see none. I turned into a narrow, thickly-wooded gorge, passed beneath an arch decorated with religious paintings, and, deciding to trespass further, came to a group of small stone buildings and rang a bell. A monk in a brown habit let me in. A minute monastery in a grove of ilex trees clung like a swallow's nest to the side of a narrow ravine. In the small courtyard stood a well; on two sides were buildings—a refectory, and a chapel built over the cave of St. Francis. On the other side ran a low stone parapet still warm

from the setting sun. It commanded a beautiful view of the distant valley framed by the dark sides of the ravine. I talked in French to the guide-monk—it was no longer a monastery but a show-place for tourists and pilgrims too.

Deep in the rock was a little cave (small because St. Francis was very small in stature) where he used to meditate, with a coffin-shaped hollow in which he slept.

It could be of no use to Baba because tourists might come to look round at any moment; another cave nearby was worse, it was by the road and even more exposed.

I felt disappointed and tired. It seemed as if I should fail Baba. I walked back as it was now getting dark.

Talking to a lady in the hotel in English, and to the Carceri guide-monk in French, I familiarized them with my interest in St. Francis and gleaned information. There was a police regulation about strangers having to sleep in a recognized hotel to be considered; the monk expostulated with me when I said I wanted to meditate for four hours. "It was dangerous even for monks to meditate so long, and you might become insane." I was able to convince him of my sincere interest. Then I learnt that when St. Francis longed to draw apart from the multitude, he and four companions would meditate separately on the slopes of Mount Subasio. He loved trees, birds, and flowers, and the Carceri cave was his favourite place for meditation. And although this was now enclosed and built over, there were other caves, perhaps even those same caves in which his companions meditated seven hundred years ago.

I explored the neighbourhood and found a ruined shelter—an overhanging eave of rock on the side of a hill. In front of this indented rock was a rough stone wall, but the roof timbers and tiles had fallen down long ago; above, the gnarled roots of a tree clung to the rock, but there was no protection from the rain.

Tall trees growing at a lower level also hid it from passers-by in the opposite side of the gorge. It was dirty, full of broken tiles, damp rubbish, and leaves. I had to excavate it, tear down bushes

to hide its entrance, and finally find a new path down the hillside so that none could see us enter it.

My instructions were to meditate in the selected place for four hours each day, to fast partially, and on the day preceding Baba's arrival to meditate for eight hours. I was thus able to test whether it was so far off the beaten track as to be secure from interruption for the twenty-four hours required for Baba, and also by my daily visits to the Monastery to prepare the way. It was not ideal, but I could find no other.

The hotel became accustomed to my long absences. I lit a small fire to drive away insects and to make it drier, but had to be careful.

Never have I found it quite so difficult to meditate as during these daily periods—contrary thoughts, the darkening hours, the encircling trees, dampness, cold, and depression. What should I do if the police or some stranger found me seated like an Indian yogi on an Italian hillside?

All Franciscan caves were incorporated in churches. Should I look for a more comfortable cave? Would Baba disapprove and blame me for not having found a better cave? And then despite all the associations of St. Francis to be unable to meditate?

I always find it hard to remember very clearly Baba's instructions, my eye and my mind are so busy following his fingers on the board. At the time they may seem clear, but they usually lack detail or provision for the miscarriage of plans. The picture is outlined in a few swift strokes, and it is taken for granted that there will be no obstacles.

I felt quite ill and very depressed as the time drew near on Friday, when I had to meditate in the cave for eight hours. I trudged up the dirty road in the heat of the sun, carrying in my rucksack the various articles required, water-bottles, a raincoat, blankets, matches, paper candles, flashlight, sticks of incense to drive away insects, a meta stove to make tea for Baba during his fast, an umbrella in case of rain. I borrowed a thick rug from the monk. I pulled down some green saplings to block the path, to close the entrance, and to put in place of the roof.

On Saturday, the fifth day of my stay in Assisi, Baba was due to arrive by car at 2 p.m. This would enable him to finish his fast by 4 p.m. on Sunday.

I felt ill and depressed. I stood at my window to watch the car come up the road from the station. Every sound seemed to herald his arrival in the hot sleepy afternoon. Three p.m. and no car came. I felt disheartened, because he is nearly always punctual, and I had received none of the customary wires.

On August 5th, before his departure by car for Assisi, Baba told his disciples to sit in the room with him. He was not due to leave until about midnight. Baba lay down for an hour, not asleep because his hands continually made signs and motions in the air; there was a stillness in the room. Baba had said previously that before he could do his work in Assisi one of two things would happen, either there would be a storm or he would be ill. He asked one of them to come nearer to him, gradually his pains increased. His illness was so severe that he was unable to start at the time arranged. Two hours later, at 2.30 a.m. they started. During the long drive Baba's pains decreased, but at La Spezia Quentin became ill, and Kaka at Pisa. It would almost seem as if the illness has been transferred to another.

The driver of the car was unsteady and at times careless. Once they were nearly run into by another car from behind, and an accident was narrowly averted.

They arrived in Assisi three hours late, at 5 p.m.

I had explained both at the hotel and to the monk that on my last day I would like to meditate for a longer period. After a wash and a meal at 6.30 p.m. our programme was arranged.

We motored part of the way up the hill to save time. I then led the party down a hidden path to the cave, which we reached at 7.30 p.m. Baba would rest in the cave during the entire fast, and none was to go near him or to look. At all costs we were to keep intruders away. If he required anything to drink it was to be put just outside the entrance. Chanji and I were to sit outside and guard the cave all night till 10 a.m., and then Kaka and Quentin

would relieve them. But at 4.30 we were to return and at 5.30 p.m. eat together, when Baba's fast was concluded. The leafy saplings hid the entrance to the cave, and blocked the path leading to it.

At 8.40 p.m. Kaka and Quentin left us to walk back to the hotel. Chanji and I shivered and sat at a little distance from the cave. He told me of the watching at a cave at Panchgani in India. Strange thoughts and questions—how little we really understood the nature of Baba's work. His body was there in the cave, but where was he? Sleep weighed so heavy on our eyelids. Could we not keep watch for a little time? Surely Saint Francis must be present too. Might not his meditations seven hundred years ago have prepared this holy place?

Cold, so sleepy, tired. About midnight we made a cup of tea on the meta stove and put it beside the entrance. Colder, and then light filtered gradually through the trees. At 9 a.m. we were relieved by the others, and walked home to sleep.

At 4.30 p.m. we returned carrying food with us. Baba came out, as his work was accomplished sooner than he expected. At 6.30 p.m. we had a very happy meal, seated round a wooden plank on the ground like children at a picnic. At 5.30 p.m. Baba had called us into the cave and explained some further plans to us; we still felt rather awed. We carefully collected some mementoes, cleared up all traces of our occupation, burned paper and rubbish, returned the blanket and some bottles for water to the monk who had been so kind.

Baba, though content with his work accomplished, was in great pain; we had to support him during our descent from the mountain, one on either side of Baba we would run together down the steep path. It seemed as if the jolting and physical exercise helped to bring him down to earth. He looked like someone dazed, suffering from a severe headache.

Climbing up through the dark ilex trees, we came on to the road. We stood on a quarry mound and looked across the valley, purple shadows and distant lights twinkling, and above the line of hills the afterglow of a golden sunset. Baba, despite his pain (once

we had to lay him down by the roadside), was entranced by the beauty of the Umbrian landscape. St. Francis must have often walked this road and enjoyed this scene. The feeling that we had assisted at a great spiritual work (though we did not understand it), Baba's presence and suffering, and the setting made our descent from the mountain memorable.

Leaving the bare hillside, we walked down. The stars came out. Baba had often to stop and rest. Passing through olive groves and cornfields, a sudden turn in the road brought a view of the city which cannot have changed much. Fireflies hovered among the trees. The battlemented walls, the ruined castle, the dusty road and the city gate with its high archway lit by an oil lamp seemed legendary.

Sunday night about 8.30 p.m. the narrow streets and the old stone buildings were dimly lit. We passed the main places associated with St. Francis. Through the market-place, and past the former home of Bernard of Quintavalle; Baba pointed to a stone where, he said, St. Francis had sat and wept the whole night through for love of Christ.

Here I interpolate the record of one of the watchers who relieved the writer of the above account at 9 a.m.

We went to hear Mass in the crypt of the San Francisco which was a wonderful and impressive beginning to a memorable day.

Afterwards we shouldered our rucksacks and toiled up the hill toward Carceri. As the sun rose it grew hotter and hotter and we were glad to reach the shade of the woods where we found the other two. They returned to Assisi and we settled down to our vigil. The woods were now alive with birds whose song was deafening—as if in memory of St. Francis they seemed to throng around us—butterflies and moths lit on our hands. The sun rose higher and even in the deep shade the heat was great.

At midday I heard sounds from inside the cave, and forgetting not to look I saw through the leaves of the saplings Baba standing with his eyes shut and facing the sun—he made strange humming

sounds; not daring to look again I lay quiet. At one o'clock he clapped his hands, we lifted the branches from the entrance—taking the board he spelt out directions, telling Kaka to go to Assisi and telling the other two to be with him at 5.30 p.m.; I was to call him at 5.30 p.m.: Baba had a dazed look in his eyes and there was no sign of recognition. No one disturbed the peace of the woods, but from time to time peasants called to each other or sang snatches of song.

The others arrived, and at 5.30 I called Baba without touching him. He spelt out on the board, "How fortunate you are to be the first to speak to me after all this." He seemed to have great difficulty in coming down from his recent state of consciousness, and it was a great struggle for him to return to the normal. He called us all into the cave and we sat around him. (He would pause from time to time to pass his hand over his forehead as if he suffered from a severe headache, and then continue.) He began to give us certain instructions and tell us what plans had been decided on for future work. After nearly an hour's talk, we broke our fast at 6.30 p.m.

The first story is now resumed:

At 10.30 p.m. we all squeezed into a small car and started for Florence. Tired yet happy, we travelled through the Italian night with Baba—not in the world, but sailing through the stars—and passers-by knew not. The driver was rash, and we nearly collided with a fast touring car on the top of a steep rise. Reaching Florence we went to a hotel to wash and eat and stretch our cramped limbs. We saw the Duomo and had coffee in the Square.

Baba became suddenly impatient.

He said that we must find a hill outside Florence where St. Francis had, unknown to legend and history, a vision of Jesus beside a spring. We had two hours in which to find it. Florence has changed much, and we could not locate the hill. Q., who knew Florence well, showed a photograph to Baba, who pointed to a hill near Fiesole. The car could not go all the way. We got down

and walked to a bare slope where Baba began to run like a nimble goat up the rocky hill. At the top we halted, but could not see the spring, yet Baba was positive that this was the spot. We had to return quickly to Florence, so he told Z. to find rooms and to arrange to return there in two weeks' time, and explore until he found the spring. (The top of the hill had been quarried away and no spring could be found—after a long search and much trespassing, Z. found in a private estate, and behind a high wall, a spring.)

We motored back to Florence.

In the cave Baba had explained that two of his followers were curiously linked, for a time they would be spiritually, to put it shortly, like Siamese twins. While we were in Florence the one felt as if a ring was encircling his hair, and continually tried to brush it away or to take off his cap, though he was bareheaded. But he felt extraordinarily happy and uplifted. The other felt tired, depressed, and ill. This seesaw between the two followers still persists, one is up and the other is down alternately.

At 10.30 a.m. we squeezed ourselves into the car—we stopped and had lunch in a "pineta," a forest by the roadside near Viareggio. We passed through Pisa, Spezia, Rapallo, through magnificent scenery to Santa Margherita; but we were so cramped and so tired and in such a hurry to rejoin the others that we hardly appreciated the drive.

On the 18th Baba and the party went to Venice, when Baba gave a discourse to those with him on the spiritual significance of St. Mark's, and on the 20th he sailed in the *Ausonia* for Alexandria, the English disciples returning home, one to Florence and others to China. A stay of five days was made in Egypt, Baba visiting the Pyramids and the Coptic church at Cairo. What interest he has in the Pyramids he kept to himself, but he said that the Coptic church contained a cave where Joseph and Mary stayed on their flight from Herod. To visit this cave was his object in going to Egypt.

The custodian of the church made some difficulty about opening the cave, but Baba insisted, and he spent some time there. Bombay was reached at the beginning of September, and Baba went straight to Nasik.

FOURTH VISIT TO EUROPE, 1932–3

In the early winter Baba sent certain of his disciples to travel through Germany, Austria, Italy, and Hungary, and sent others to China and America. Earlier in the year he had sent two Indian disciples to Australia and New Zealand. On November 21, 1932, Baba sailed for Europe on the *Conte Verde*. He sent a message to India on this voyage, which reads as follows:

India is a spiritual country. It possesses the most fortunate and unique position in the world of being the land of saints and spiritual masters, since ages. Therefore the spiritual atmosphere of India must be kept up even at the cost of being in bondage and materially unhappy.

It does not matter how much India suffers, as long as its spiritual power and value are retained. Moreover, the result of its present suffering will be freedom and happiness.

It is only after experiencing bondage and misery that the true value of freedom and happiness is really appreciated.

But to bring this suffering to an earlier end, there must be love for friend and foe, goodwill, patience, and forbearance. Also, India should try to remedy its own defects, instead of clamouring at the faults of others. And the hatred between the leading communities, and their petty yet disastrous quarrels and fights, must cease—and the freedom and happiness of India are ensured.

The world will soon realize that neither cults, creeds, dogmas, religious ceremonies, lectures, and sermons, on the one hand, nor, on the other hand, ardent seeking for material welfare or physical

pleasures, can ever bring about real happiness—but that only selfless love and universal brotherhood can do it.

Baba arrived at Venice on December 2nd, and after visiting Milan and Paris reached London on December 6th, where he stayed at a Knightsbridge hotel until the 14th, seeing a large number of people, when he left for Switzerland. He sailed from Genoa on the 17th by the *Esperia* for Egypt, where he remained until January 3rd the following year.

After a visit to the Pyramids Baba left Port Said on January 3rd by the *Baloeran* with the intention of going to Ceylon, which was reached on the 12th. Baba stayed in Colombo until the 30th of the month. While there he went with three of his disciples for a short stay at Bandravella in the hills. One day he expressed a desire to find a place where he could retire into seclusion for twenty-four hours, in the same manner as he had done at Assisi. The party walked up by a narrow path to a Buddhist temple. The novice who was looking after the temple was not anxious to allow them to enter, so they descended some steps into a small courtyard adjoining the temple. A door opened, and an old man came out who appeared to be at least one hundred years old. He seemed to recognize Baba, and communicated with him by signs. Baba also talked by signs, telling him that he wished to retire into a room for twenty-four hours without being disturbed. The old man understood, and ordered the novice to open the temple and to show Baba the room adjoining, which Baba used. The return to Nasik took place on February 6th.

A VISIT TO BABA, 1933

Arrangements were completed for a party of English disciples, women and girls, to visit India, with the intention, afterwards,

of going on to China and California. On March 24th six of the girls accompanied by one man disciple, who had previously acted as Baba's English secretary, left London; they were met in Paris by three other girls, and on the 27th they sailed from Genoa in the *Victoria*. Bombay was reached on April 8th, where the party was met by several Indian disciples, including two women. They were driven to a hotel, where there were others to meet them. Then they were taken to meet Baba, who had with him Mani, his sister, Gulmai, his spiritual mother, and the mothers, wives, and sisters of other disciples. The following is what one of the visitors wrote:

The day after our arrival a reception was given for us—people came from all parts to pay their respects to Baba, one by one they kissed his hand and laid their offering of flowers at his feet. The atmosphere was electric; watching, I held my breath impressed and thrilled. Our next move was to meet Baba and several of his Indian disciples at a hill station called Bhandandara—we had a charming bungalow, everything had been splendidly organized—nothing being left to chance, from there to Agra—and the Taj Mahal by moonlight—then again with the sun streaming on it and over the fortifications built by Shah Jahan. I had for some time been observing a curious change in myself, which came to a climax on this Indian trip—for I had always dreamed of going to India—the East has always had an irresistible attraction for me. Before meeting Baba I had spent a great deal of time travelling—Europe, America, West Indies, Japan, etc. I always wanted to be on the move and see different things, know different things. I had dabbled in all sorts of isms in my search for the truth, but now I found that none had a real hold on me any more—being with Baba was the only thing that mattered to me—time and place were of no account. The day after seeing the Taj Mahal, Baba told me that there was a possibility of our returning to Europe. Our next stop, Murree, did not attract me very much—it was too English. The drive from Murree to Srinagar is surely one of the most beautiful



SHRI MEHER BABA, ITALY, 1933

in the world, more majestic even than Switzerland and with the added thrill of the mysterious Himalayas. At Srinagar we settled down on three house-boats stationed on the river Jhelum. From there we took excursions to the famous garden of the emperor Jahangir and various other places. Baba explained that there were spiritual reasons for our visit to India—and he now told all that we had to leave India immediately. In three weeks we had travelled from Bombay to Kashmir and back again from intense heat to autumnal weather. My chief impression was stumbling in and out of trains and in and out of cars, no sooner had we got settled in one spot, when we had to pack up and move on. We were very interested to hear from the Indians of their various experiences with Baba and heard a great deal of his early life. We compared the way he worked in the West and found that with us he works differently with each individual and disciplines his tried and trained followers of the East more than those of the West. But one and all would willingly lay down their lives for him and believe that in him they see the Way to The Truth and The Life.

We left on the *Britannia*, April 27th.

A fuller diary of the girls' visit to India reads as follows:

Needless to say, those of us who had parents or close relations found them to be displeased at our plans, they could not approve of what we were doing, but that did not keep any of us back. What a feeling it must be to be free to decide one's own life and plans! It wastes so much energy, doing things in the face of much opposition.

The journey was interesting, pleasant, and uneventful. We broke the journey at Port Said and Aden, and some went to a dance. Baba had sent us definite orders not to sun-bathe when on the Red Sea, and about taking plenty of iced lemonade, etc. Until leaving London we had been allowed to eat fish. After leaving London, no fish allowed. Not one detail did he leave us to settle. He thought out everything beforehand. We kept our plans very much to ourselves—and it was not till the last night that they

leaked out. This I think was the cause of so much trouble with the Press later. We got up one show on the boat for the band as we had danced most evenings in the second-class saloon.

At Bombay we were met by many of Baba's disciples. Most of us went direct to the hotel, while two or three stayed behind to see after the luggage. We had on the spot to decide about luggage, as all heavy stuff was to go through Cook's direct to Colombo and there we were to pick it up on our way to Japan. The boys were rather horrified at all our luggage, but it was for six months, and though wardrobe trunks are very large, and not practicable for travelling, we had all been advised to buy them; a trunk for furs we left to be sent direct to America.

Baba was about twenty-five miles outside Bombay at Kandevely, with a group of twelve Indian women disciples. I think the boys were staying elsewhere.

At 2 p.m. the car arrived at the hotel to take us all to him. Imagine our excitement! We all put on our summer clothes and our best—the only occasion on which we ever wore our best clothes: nearly all we had was unsuitable as it turned out.

It was a pleasant drive, especially around Bombay—seeing the gardens and looking down from above over Bombay harbour. The rest of the journey was a little dull and uninteresting, on the flat all the time. At last we arrived. We were shown into a large salon upstairs leading on to a large balcony, two rooms leading out from left to right. We made for the right and found the girls with many saris lying around on beds and on the floor, and Dolly lying rather ill on the bed, but no Baba. In the other room Baba was awaiting us. I got there first, slipping as usual on the floor—and falling, for Baba to save me in time.

The women were delighted and charming, and made us all feel at home and happy. First we took off our European clothes and dressed in gorgeous saris, each choosing what she felt suited her best. We all sat together in the centre of the room. After an hour we had to change again into our own things as downstairs there had already been assembled, for two hours or more, a large

group of people coming to pay their respects to Baba—people of all ages, men, women, children, each with a garland of flowers to lay at his feet.

At the appointed hour Baba came downstairs with us all, excepting Mehera and the sick lady. He sat on a sofa dressed in his white robes—and the rest of us about the room, some on chairs, some on the floor. It was a wonderful scene: men, women, and children. To some Baba gave advice and help, to others just his blessing. Most, I believe, came for help rather than just out of love. I suppose about a hundred came. When the last had gone, Baba retired upstairs and we set about planning the little performance we had thought out for him.

Towards eight o'clock we felt Baba was getting tired. The boys motored us back to Bombay, and we were glad to get to bed. The next afternoon we spent a short time with Baba. We had that morning got our Chinese visas and brought them to Baba to see. I don't remember very clearly about this afternoon. Many group photographs were taken on the balcony. Norina tried to comfort the Indian women, who were already feeling sad at Baba's leaving them the following day. Some of us seemed very tired and slept. There were many private interviews and much business discussed, and we talked freely with the Indian women, trying to get to know them better. Baba was leaving Sunday morning early for Bhandardara.

Chanji and one or two of the other boys remained to see us off early on Monday at 6 a.m. for Igatpuri Station, where we had to change. Here we arrived at about ten and found two cars and a wagon for our luggage. The first part of the drive was slow. Within ten minutes of starting we were held up nearly twenty minutes or more at a railway crossing. There we remained with cows all around in the broiling sun. Some of us got out and walked about. You can imagine how we disliked any pause on the way. One car was comfortable and had a good driver, not so the other. The boys travelled with the luggage behind. The drive became more and more interesting as we got up higher—5,000 feet up. About two-

thirds of the way we ran short of water—one car went ahead and we had some difficulty in obtaining water. The engine got very hot with so much climbing. We started off again and later overtook the other car which was waiting for water. You need wonderful drivers in these parts—the roads curve and curve and are very narrow. On either side we saw wonderful trees and flowers. At one point the door of the car flew open, and I should have been in the roadway in a heap had not Margaret caught hold of me in the nick of time.

At last we arrived in Bhandardara about 4 p.m.—a most lovely spot. First we crossed one of the biggest viaducts in the world. We lost our way and had to ask the direction as we drew near. After crossing the viaduct we passed Lake Arthur on the right and came to two gates. We then found ourselves in a wonderful garden, gay with bright-coloured flowers, trees, etc., and a low-built bungalow. At the back were mountains. It was a dream—and we felt so happy, miles away from everyone. It was a perfect two or three days—Norina, Elizabeth, and Vivienne had one room, Margaret, Mabel, Delia, and Minta another, Audrey, Christina, and I the other—but these two adjoined. The boys slept in another part of the bungalow or on the balcony. They all had their beds with them. Christina had a bad finger, but it did not really heal until the return journey, although Dr. Ghani treated it.

The weather was perfect and each of the three days we were there we went for bathes and walks up the mountains. Elizabeth and I could not walk as far as the others. The nights with stars and moon were wonderful, such a peaceful atmosphere. Coming back from a long walk one evening we saw a magnificent sight—lightning, clouds, sun setting, moon rising. We stopped to watch for some minutes. Baba seemed displeased that we were not all with him to see it.

Another day we walked along the viaduct among beautiful flowers and exotic plants. Audrey took many photos of Baba. We picked fruit—a red fruit—as I remember Baba smiling at our red

lips and fingers. We also picked white flowers, but the keepers were not pleased to see us doing it. Once Baba held a long meeting in his room—over an hour—and Ramju waited and kept watch outside the door.

In many ways these three days were the best, so free from cares and worries. There was one little disturbance. Audrey and Christina had met two quite nice young men on the boat and naturally they wanted to correspond with them. Both had come out from English firms to jobs in Bombay. But Baba had to stop this for his own reasons. It was necessary that our visit should be kept to its original plan—to visit a spiritual teacher and contact his Eastern disciples, and visit certain places for spiritual reasons. It was hard for the young ones to understand, but they obeyed Baba's orders in this matter.

Well, our three days were up and we had to depart. Three days is the longest period for which the Government lets these bungalows.

From Igatpuri we travelled direct to Agra, spending one night in the train. Wonderful trains: our compartment like a sitting-room, with plenty of room in the centre for luggage, food, etc. We had one break en route, as I remember changing and Delia feeling very sick sitting on her luggage on the platform. Baba had all his meals in the compartment. We took our dinner in the restaurant and tea in the compartment.

On the way to Agra we stopped at Nasik Station. Here was a large gathering of people to see Baba. A few entered his carriage and laid garlands of flowers at his feet. Some kissed his feet and some wept. As the train passed out they all cheered in their native tongue—Jai! Jai! (Hail!)

A curious man travelling on the same train constantly kept on watching us and noting our actions. I was awakened in the night by the noise of a blind moving. Baba in his turban was up in a twinkling and the man disappeared. This same man followed us to a hotel at Agra, and watched us continually.

We arrived at Agra—such a clear and beautiful spot, and three

cars drove us to an English hotel, or what seemed to us like one. The servants were all Indian—very quiet. You could not hear a sound when they walked. The food was excellent here. The hotel was large—consisting of one storey only but of several bungalows. We were all in different parts. Audrey and I shared one next to Baba and Kaka. Out of our bedrooms were ante-rooms including tubs, etc., for baths—all spotlessly clean.

It was very hot here and Baba would not let us go out at mid-day. That same evening at ten we set out in cars for the Taj Mahal. Again this same inquisitive man followed us closely all the time, which made some of us laugh, when we should have been struck dumb at the beauty confronting us.

The long pathway leading up to the Taj is beautiful with its wide extent of garden on either side of the path and stream. We waited patiently for the moon to rise and were afraid it would not. But it rose after 10 p.m. and the glories of the white marble revealed themselves slowly, a bit at a time.

We went again next day without Baba. He was very tired, as he had not slept all night and Kaka had sat up with him.

Baba called me to him this second day and said that it might be necessary for us to return home after our tour. Would we go, and obey all his instructions? He said the boys would remain with him. He continued that he had money put aside for such an emergency and would later tell us what his instructions would be. I never saw him quite so unhappy as when he said this. After lunch some of us, Delia, Margaret, Norina, and I, were told the same story, and all, of course, said they would obey his will, whatever it was. Minta was not told till we got to Srinagar, and the others at Murree.

On the second day we left our hotel at 3 p.m. and made again for the station for Rawalpindi—en route for Meerut and Kashmir. I do not recall anything very special about this journey. Baba asked for a map and seemed disappointed that we could not supply one. He thought we should have one of Europe. He wanted to plan another European trip on his returning West again. It was

hot, but for the time of the year very cool—remarkably so, Baba said. There was a slight storm, rain and thunder which helped to cool the air.

We had ample provisions. The boys were wonderful. In the centre of the room we had an ice-box, kept always replenished, and on top soda-water, mangoes, tangerines, butter, cheese, water melon. Of these we partook frequently. Baba insisted on our having ice-packs. These he put on our heads himself. What we noticed most was the enormous amount of dust. Our clothes got filthy. One day's wear was enough. In fact, two changes would have been acceptable.

Still, to have Baba the whole day, visiting only at short intervals the boys who were in another compartment, and the rest of the party who came for most of the time into our compartment, was real joy. There seemed not a care in the world beyond that of thinking how best to look after Baba's needs and wishes and moods. Often as is usual he would leave us, apparently leaving only his body with us. He usually retired early on these trips and arose early at dawn—long before any of us were awake.

At last, about 3 p.m. the following day, we arrived at Rawalpindi and were met by Vishnu, Adi, and Pendu. After seeing that all our small baggage had got safely out of the train, and leaving this in charge of the boys, we followed Baba out of the station. Everywhere we seemed to cause attraction. To see a group of young English girls with a group of young Indian boys is no common sight. Baba always took the initiative, supervising each detail himself. On most occasions, to hide his identity, he wore a pair of coloured glasses, and a hat drawn well over his ears. Between stations he let his hair loose and in stations wore his beret. At stations we were a curiosity. We in weird head-dresses and light-coloured frocks, and Baba among us. All peeped in to look and we enjoyed the fun immensely.

At Rawalpindi there lived, so Baba told us, a wonderful saint who was one of his chief agents in India and gave orders to thousands on lower planes. It is a very important junction, for here all must

change for Kashmir province. Outside the station were three private cars, very carefully chosen by the boys as regards the drivers. The drive up to Srinagar is one of the most dangerous in all India. Baba arranged the different cars—Norina and Elizabeth drove with him. I was in the second with Audrey and Christina and two others. The boys were with the luggage, the rest in the third car. Off we started, and what a drive! Mountains all around. Just after starting we pulled up to take in petrol. I remember a number of toll-gates and money being paid out. I don't know why, but I was always afraid for some reason or other that we should be stopped and sent back.

We stopped after an hour or so and had tea en route. We were interested in the little bazaars, but what we did not care for were the everlasting streams of beggars who surrounded us whenever we were at a standstill. And what a pitiable sight—the blind—the halt—the maimed—the sick; children, young and old—scantily clothed in the usual rug. Such poverty. Nothing like it in the West, I should think. But Baba did not allow us to give, if I remember. We bought biscuits and lemonade often. The journey was mostly up-hill. We were mounting every inch of the way to Murree, among woods, valleys, and lakes. On either side were the everlasting rice-fields—a beautiful green when ripening, otherwise just marshy plots of ground. Another interesting sight was the carts drawn by oxen—another peculiarity of India.

At last we sighted Murree. We stopped outside the camp quarters. Crowds around the hotel, a great stir. The hotel is just opening for the season under new management.

Well, to continue. Think of the sight! Three cars arriving and one wagon with about thirty to forty suitcases, beds, etc. All the unemployed men just fought for the job of earning about one-tenth of a penny. On this they live per day, on rice and dahl. They were unshaven and dressed in a coarse rug, and here were we in our coolest dresses, looking gay, happy, prosperous, and full of laughter, and clean, and they dirty and miserable. Baba dismounted first to go and inspect what accommodation the boys

had selected. The hotel was in two parts—a chalet and a main building.

Baba, the boys, T., Margaret, and Mabel slept in the chalet—having lovely balconies and what we would call a suite, bedroom, sitting-room, and a tubroom for ablutions. The rest were on a level with the street. It was still cold—we were glad to have a wood fire. I remember one night the seven of us slept around this fire to keep warm.

Well, we got settled in; Baba again looking to each detail in each room, and settling where each was to sleep. The food was not bad and the place was clean. It was rather expensive. I remember trying to get something off the bill. We asked for ices and they charged us about 1s. 6d. a head.

Murree itself is beautiful, but once up into the camp quarters it is hideous with Government buildings and bungalows—no idea of respecting the landscape. It is just a military camp, a military hospital, a training camp, too. The feeling between English and Indians is anything but friendly in this part, and the army scorn the people of the land. You feel it every second you are there. They really seem a down-trodden race. We went for some lovely walks the three days we were there. Baba was not really happy. He was working terribly hard. It was for a spiritual purpose that we were there.

Vivienne Giesen, I remember, could never keep warm and was not well here at all—so tired all the time, poor girl.

We had tea on our balcony. From Baba's balcony we saw some of the most beautiful sunsets and watched them for an hour or more. To look, he said, straight at the setting sun was very beneficial to the eyes.

We visited the bazaars and took some walks with Baba. We were never allowed to go out alone, only in couples, or more.

There was much to discuss here, especially with Elizabeth and Norina. Baba told them both he was probably sending them back to New York, and cabling to and fro began. There were also walks

in the evenings, but I cannot at the moment remember what was discussed.

After two days we prepared to continue our trip. Baba ordered T. and the boys to go ahead at 5 a.m. with the luggage; we were to follow in the same cars at 8 a.m. I remember being called at 4.30 by Adi to show him the luggage going in advance. (I was in a bad mood!)

We got off at eight and started on the most beautiful trip in the world. As it was almost a twelve-hour run by car, Baba broke the journey three times and we took it in turns to be in his car. His car went fastest and always led the way. We stopped at eleven for tea in a wayside inn, or Government building, and were glad to stretch our legs. The tolls extracted from travellers in Kashmir are notorious. Every few miles cars are held up, papers signed, and money paid. To go into Kashmir State cost our party £25. Baba knew these people well. They liked him. After the refreshing tea and a wash and brush-up, we continued our journey for an hour or so—with the lovely scenery of mountains, Jehlum valley, and rice-fields on all sides.

At noon we decided to stop and picnic alongside the Jehlum valley. We got out of our cars and walked through a couple of fields to the water's edge and shade of a couple of trees. Our drivers carried rugs, cushions, and food to the spot. An old man belonging to the valley brought Baba two jars of drinking spring water. This pleased Baba. He gave him some fruit, always a sign with Baba that he is happy and pleased. We spent about an hour and a half here, and then made our way to the main road and off again for our destination. The road became more dangerous, less straight, and curved in and out. From time to time we would meet bands of Government workers repairing the roadway. In this part are continual landslides owing to heavy rains—but in spite of this we drove at a great speed, Baba's car always leading, ours second. Higher and higher we got, till within twenty miles of Srinagar, and there we got on to the flat and for miles drove through long avenues of trees. Just before we reached there I remember a little

incident. Audrey was sitting next to the driver and was eating oranges, as we all did, and naturally offered the driver a piece and spoke a few words. I was not aware that Baba had seen the incident, but shortly after we were all stopped, Baba called Audrey and took her off a little distance with Adi and lectured her, telling her she must not talk to these men. Poor Audrey! I don't think she quite understood, and was very silent for the rest of the journey. She had to sit at the back and I in front.

At last Srinagar, and we sighted the boys, Tod, and our huge car-load of baggage. The boys had been awaiting us a couple of hours or more. Imagine the excitement we all caused and the crowds that stood around as we parked in the open square. Baba held a long chat (on the alphabet board) with the boys. They had already been to look at the house-boats and were now reporting to Baba. The alternative was a hotel. After much debating and the cries of many boat-owners, all advertising their own boats, we got started. Srinagar is not a big town. It has its main river and little back-waters. It was one of these that we now went to look at. We stopped half-way down the street, got out of the cars, and Baba and the boys inspected the boats. After twenty minutes Baba returned and ordered us to prepare to cross over. We climbed down the bank one by one into a kind of ferry-boat and on to the house-boat. These boats are unique. They each accommodate about five, and we being a party of fifteen took three boats and the cook's boat for service. The boats consist of a terrace on top and beneath two sitting-rooms and three bedrooms each with their own offices. The owners of ours, father and son, were used to English visitors and their ways, and I am inclined to think were cleaner than most. Ours were very well furnished. We had tea all together in the bungalow, Baba's boat. Other meals, we were divided. Baba, Kaka, Margaret, Minta, and I were in one boat; Mabel, Audrey, Delia, Tod in another; Christina, Vivienne, Elizabeth, and Norina in the third, and the boys in a fourth. As usual Baba arranged everything and we lacked nothing in comfort and food.

Baba took all his meals with the boys and would often come

and sit at our table while we ate, if he was finished first. The one thing that marred this week in one of the most beautiful spots in the world was the weather. It was wet and cold. When the sun did shine, what a transformation! Only one day could we sit on the terrace and bathe in the sunshine. We shivered at night, not having brought any warm clothes. Our winter clothing lay in our big trunks at Colombo. Norina and Elizabeth were wiser and had both air beds and blankets with them. Vivienne was never warm the whole week and looked like a ghost. When the sellers of Kashmir wool pestered us in our boats, we all fell and ordered dresses, coatees, or suits, just because we had nothing warm with us.

The other slightly disturbing factor was the future uncertainty of our plans. These were definitely settled four days before leaving —Minta took it very well. Christina could not understand quite. Audrey, thrilled with the spirit of adventure, saw excitement in it all. The rest of us were sad, but knew Baba's will had to be obeyed. Some say Baba knew all along that we would not visit China with him, and that it was a test to us all.

For the most part Baba planned each day. There were the lovely gardens to see. It was a little early for the flowers, but even so they were beautiful and interesting in the Oriental way. We who had been brought up with Kew, Hampton Court, and the many beautiful private gardens in England, did not view them with the same amount of ecstasy as the Indians. As we sat on one of the terraces, Mohammedans in front of us knelt in prayer. Baba bade us watch silently.

Baba gave us the choice of still moving about in three cars or taking one open bus. We chose the latter, as this enabled us to be together and to sit with Baba. Baba seems to be always very susceptible to draught round his head. Maybe it interferes with his working in some way—but I remember so often wrapping his head round with woollen scarves, coats, etc., and pulling up the tarpaulin on the bus.

Perhaps the outstanding experience during the week was our

visit one afternoon to Harvan and the reservoir, and trout streams. The indescribable peace that hung about Harvan! You felt like speaking only in whispers. Why this indescribable calmness, serenity? Why had Baba taken us to this spot—the culminating point of our journey? It was within a few yards of this spot that Baba had fasted and spent four months two years previously. Baba was averse to getting out of the car, as he did not want to be recognized. He remained until we were departing, and then some little boys who remembered him from the previous visit ran after our car, but we went too fast for them. We saw the actual spot where Baba remained, but it being wet and damp Baba would not let us climb the hillside, as some of us would like to have done.

Baba had told us previously that at Kashmir he was going to explain many spiritual things to us, but this never happened. The only explanation we had was about the beginnings of creation. Another wonderful afternoon was spent at another lake—some two or three hours away. It was a rough drive and we were inclined to get our wheels stuck in the mud, and before reaching our destination Baba bade us all get out and walk. This was a real picnic. We heated water that Pendu fetched from the hotel nearby, and made our tea and ate the cake and sandwiches we had brought with us. Baba ran about with us all, up and down the lawns, full of fun and energy. We returned home by a different route.

Evenings were spent in Baba's room altogether, sometimes talking, music, etc.—other times explanations. We went to bed always early, and Baba liked us all to be up early—soon after seven we were called. The other outstanding excursion was the morning we went into the town by little boats, visiting en route the backs of factories, etc., on the river. A misunderstanding arose. We were in three or four different boats. Baba had meant us to go direct to the Bank, P.O., etc. Instead, we wandered around for one hour at least and missed each other. We were all cold. To add to Baba's troubles that day, we had left Tod in bed on the boat. Baba returned to the boat telling Tod he had had a miserable morning

—everything had gone wrong. But out of the misunderstanding Baba can turn all for good. He arouses our feelings and emotions and so increases our love and energy.

Baba gave us the alternative of remaining on at Srinagar two extra days, or going down to visit a certain place where a number of his followers were gathered together. We did not want to part from Baba a moment before it was necessary, so the vote was to remain where we were to the last minute. The last days were spent in Baba giving each one of us a talk about future plans. Norina and Elizabeth to return to New York. Tod to remain on the Continent, going to St. Margherita to await further orders. We to return to Marseilles and there await a cable at Cook's from Baba, saying whether we return to London or await him there and go with him to New York.

At last came the final day. We departed early in the morning to arrive at Rawalpindi to catch the 9 p.m. two-day express to Bombay. The drive back was as beautiful, we all thought, as the upward journey—but our plans were frustrated by an enormous landslide caused by the heavy rains. We did think of returning by the Jammu Pass, but thought the rains there would have been more severe. As it turned out that pass was perfect, and there was no landslide.

Baba bade us all get out of our cars—and those with the luggage met us at this spot. We were delayed four to five hours. It was almost miraculous to watch the speed of the workers—to see how quickly they rebuilt the bank. We ate meanwhile our lunch—took walks up and down—it was sunny and hot. At last the repaired road was pronounced safe, but before Baba would allow any of us to cross, he first went alone in the car.

We continued. It grew dark and cool. We got as far as Murree; here the luggage wagon was forbidden by martial law to go further, as it was after dark. Baba decided that the boys and luggage must remain on the road, and the boys sleep as best they could. (They never slept a wink—were cold, hungry, and uncomfortable.) But Baba never worries over their comforts. Rather the reverse.

He likes them to face hardships. We continued, having got with us our necessities for the night.

The last part of the journey seemed long. I was in Baba's car. He was working or sleeping most of the time. From time to time we passed those quaint oxen-driven carts—now on their way—lit up by quaint lanterns. It was after ten when we got to Rawalpindi. Here we slept for the night, very comfortably—oh, how tired we were! In the morning we had baths, tea, and assembled altogether to a good breakfast in the restaurant. The train left at two. Baba would not allow us to leave the platform. We had two excellent compartments for the two-day trip, and travelled very comfortably. We had no change. Poor Delia was ill, but recovered after a few hours. We kept cheerful till the last hour approached. Adi senior and Vishnu joined the train at Bandra station before Bombay and handed me ticket money—and the first mail any of us had seen. Baba did not leave us here, but came straight to Bombay, then left us at the docks without a glance of recognition and walked away with his yellow glasses and beret on.

On arriving at the docks there were the usual formalities to attend to. Baba had bidden us take no further notice of him once we disembarked from the train. We had health certificates to be signed, etc. The boys saw to our luggage and came on board to our cabins. We had first-class cabins. The tourist part was full, for Vishnu had only applied two days earlier for our cabins, so we were put in a wing of the first class.

On the voyage we met several very charming people. We preferred to keep our plans to ourselves, but this was not to be. Before leaving Bombay we saw a *Daily Mirror* of April with a full-page account of our visit to the East—to follow a Hindu Master, etc., etc., describing each of us separately and our addresses in London. Think of our dismay! But worse was to follow. Second day out came cables from London newspapers, with prepaid replies to know why we were returning, were we being deported, or were we disillusioned, or was money short? At Marseilles, more fuss. A dozen reporters came on the boat and I being appointed

spokesman—Norina and Tod having already gone ashore—they all came to my cabin. I found them polite; afterwards the articles in the French papers were more truthful and far better than those of the English newspapers. The latter were out for sensational news and another Rasputin story. In spite of all precautions, some of us got photographed, and one pressman was clever enough to board the taxi that two of the group had taken and accompanied them to a hairdresser in Marseilles.

On their arrival at Marseilles two of the girls returned to America on Baba's instructions, and the others came home to England.

FIFTH VISIT TO THE WEST

Baba remained at Nasik until June 4th, when he went to Bombay, and on the 12th he sailed from Bombay for Europe in the *Victoria*, accompanied by Chanji, Kaka, Adi, and Pendu. The ship arrived at Genoa on the 24th, where Baba was met by a number of his English friends, including those who had returned from India, and a villa was taken at Portofino, though there was not room for all the party, some staying in the village. Each member of the party had his own special job, either looking after the villa, or typing, writing letters, translating, and so on. A visit to Rome was made on the 7th; the account of this visit by one who took part in it is as follows:

Norina, Elizabeth, Minta, Kitty, Pendu, Dadu, Tina, and the brother of one of the girls accompanied Baba. Elizabeth drove us in her car to the station before midnight on the 6–7th of July. We who helped to carry the luggage down the hill to the car were amazed at the quantity they took for two days. (Kaka insisted on Baba's big green trunk being taken.)

We waited some time on the platform, the train was not due till

BABA'S CABIN ON THE HILL
MEHERABAD, 1935





SHRI MEHER BABA
ZÜRICH, 1934

12.30 a.m. Baba became ill. (This illness seemed to be the prelude to important spiritual working, we recalled Assisi eleven months previously.) Kitty rushed to get a hot-water bottle filled at the restaurant; unfortunately it leaked on the blanket. The train came in and they hurried into the carriage. Three of us had to stand part of the way and got little sleep.

On Friday at 8.15 a.m. we arrived in Rome and went to the Élysée Hotel. The ladies slept on one floor and the men near to Baba's room on the upper floor.

After breakfast we motored round Rome's seven hills. We went to Saint Peter's. Baba wore a small beret to hide his flowing hair, walking in the midst of our party he was able to enter the church without taking it off. He walked up the church and stood in the centre beneath the dome, there he turned to the four quarters and made a sign. Then along the left aisle; he would not allow us to linger and look at the sights, he turned and walked rapidly back to the West door. (Near was the famous Della Robbia statue of the Madonna and dead Christ. The model for Norina's face in *The Miracle*.) The forecourt is truly magnificent. Inside it is too ornate, and there is little spiritual atmosphere. We then visited the Capitoline Hill, the Forum, and the Coliseum. Baba went inside for a few minutes. We drove round Mussolini's office twice.

That afternoon, after seeing some visitors, Baba went to a famous café—Aragno al Corso—where for centuries politicians and men of affairs were accustomed to sit and talk. It is the central point of Rome and much traffic passes by. Our tables were on the pavement, we ate rolls, cakes and lemon-water ices. Baba watched the people and the cars and talked with M. and N. who were sitting either side of him. Suddenly he was absent, the balloon had soared into the air. Some of the party did not recognize the change and continued to chatter to him.

Several people stared at Baba while we were seated at the café. We then walked along to select a cinema. We went to a variety and cinema show (*White Shadows*, a very good film, Baba liked the Hawaiian dancing). The theatre had a circular roof which

rolled away when the variety turns were on. Swallows flew over the circular opening, the blue sky and fresh air were delightful. Baba worked as usual during much of the show. That night we went early to bed. Baba had work to do throughout the night. The next morning he told us that his work had been achieved more quickly than he anticipated. Therefore we were to return to Santa Margherita that afternoon.

Before leaving the villa Baba had given strict instructions that no one was to come to the house for meals, except for tea, "Not even the Archangel Gabriel." A wire came to Rome asking, "Can X come to lunch to-day?" Baba, on receipt of the wire, remarked, "Not even the Archangel Gabriel, and yet they ask." He did not wire. This led to a curious sequel on our arrival.

After breakfast we again drove round the city, this time in two cars—the Lateran, the holy staircase (Baba stayed in the car), the many fountains of Rome, to the Vatican Museum and galleries. We were very interested by the double circular staircase arranged so cunningly that on looking over the balustrade you could not distinguish the ascending from the descending stairs. A little tired of speeding through the endless galleries we sat down in the Sistine Chapel. P. asked Baba many historical and intellectual questions about popes, cardinals, and artists. Baba did not wish it. He said that "This place, to-day, has really been blessed." The horizontally-placed mirror that reflects Michelangelo's frescoed ceiling showed a full-length picture of God, His outstretched finger touching the hand of Adam, and communicating the spark of life to Adam. We read in the Old Testament that God was a jealous God. In the Vatican we positively raced through the galleries, actually running down flights of stairs to the bewilderment of the custodians. Baba does not seem to wish that we should give our minds to the beauties of Art, he tantalizes us with the spectacles and wonders of Rome, Venice, Paris, Madrid, London, Agra, Kashmir, China, and America, but the moment we turn aside to look he whisks us away.

It was very hot after lunch and most Romans disappear to sleep.

N. had arranged for a string of visitors. Unfortunately, being Romans, they arrived late. Baba said he would not see the latecomers, it was with great difficulty that some of them got into Baba's room after their appointed times.

Anita had asked for a certain reproduction of a picture from Rome. Half an hour before we were due to leave Baba himself went with Kitty and Minta to buy this picture for her. When our taxis reached the station the driver became very insolent, took advantage of our being foreigners, and charged a ridiculous price. Fortunately Tina understood Italian and warned us it was exorbitant. A policeman came on the scene and luckily took our part, a just price was paid (of course our luggage was great) and we went on the platform. Another upset thus marked our departure from Rome. Baba did not like Rome and was happy to be on the train leaving the city. We all had coffee on the platform and the journey was a happy one till we reached Santa Margherita at 11.45 p.m. No one met us and Baba looked tired and disappointed. We had to hire another car because it took some time (and might be too late) for E. to get her car from the garage at midnight. On arrival at the foot of the hill on which the villa stood, again no one to help us carry the bags the very steep half-mile. Baba looked tired and sad, some had gone to bed even. Baba went straight to his bedroom.

An incident that took place at Portofino on July 10th is worth recording in the words used by one who was there:

After tea, fifteen or sixteen of us went for a walk with Baba along the cliff. He took us down a rather dangerous cliff to the sea. Some lagged behind, despite Baba's repeated calls to keep together. Several fell out by the wayside, their shoes, their dresses, or their nerves were not sufficient to enable them to slide down a steep incline to the sea. Baba, two girls and two boys only, reached the sea-washed shores. Instead of returning the way we came, Baba tried to climb back another way. The others returned home along the top path. (We did not realize just how dangerous and steep it

was.) Nimble and light-footed, Baba climbed up the smooth rocky surfaces—what could we do but follow? When we had ascended half-way, we dare not look back or contemplate return. Baba was very gentle with the two girls, and always helped them over difficult places. By this time we had grasped the idea that it might be a symbolic adventure, so we went forward confident in Baba.

We were stuck. Baba and S. tried several paths and climbs. Above was a sheer surface of rock and thin trees, and round to the right was a precipice that fell almost perpendicularly from a great height into the sea. We searched for the main path, which we hoped to rejoin, though we did not realize it was more than 150 feet above us. S. crept round corners, climbed up stone cliffs, hung on to the roots of bushes, his heart beating like a piston.

He half expected that a miracle would happen or that Baba would suddenly find a simple way out. After thirty minutes or more of futile efforts S. noticed a very steep cleft that seemed to have been used as a tip for earth and rubbish, it provided a very insecure footing, and fifteen feet up it was blocked by a very large boulder, so smooth that it offered neither foothold nor grips for the hand. It seemed the only possible way out.

Baba, wiry, lightly-built, and nimble, climbed first, scattering a little earth behind him. He clapped his hands as a signal for us to follow and disappeared from view. S. followed, but stuck on the boulder for some anxious minutes, the two girls and the other youth were waiting below. Above was a very steep gully, perhaps forty feet deep, filled with loose earth, rusty bits of metal, broken glass; a foot moved meant the descent upon the girls below of stones, possibly a small avalanche of rubbish and earth. A final wriggle and S. got past the boulder. By hanging on to the roots of bushes he could crouch on the loose earth, but he could not manage the remaining forty feet. Baba had completely disappeared. The youth who weighed five stone or less came next, a slight hand grip, and he was past the boulder.

Baba's last signal had been "Come up." S. told Vivienne to follow on. She stuck on the boulder, her strength slowly ebbed.

We shouted for help to Baba, and heard no response. Had he left us in the lurch? Was it a test? or had he relied on S. to see the girls through the difficult place? S. thought of heroic things he ought to do but could not do. He himself was gradually slipping downwards. Any desperate move meant a torrent of earth into V.'s face. She hung suspended there for ten or fifteen minutes, possibly longer; it seemed an age. Two fingers of her right hand clinging to a small hole in the rock, her body on the smooth boulder, and her left knee wedged in the rock at the side.

The others had returned to the house. They were surprised that after two hours we had not yet returned. Meanwhile, Baba had left the gully, mounted still higher up the cliff and was clapping his hands to attract attention. We were a mile or more away from the house. No one heard him. But an Italian boy Tino, who worked on the estate, met a priest or so he seemed, who told him of the clapping. He ran to Baba, understood his signs to fetch ropes, and rushed back to the house kitchen. Kaka, Adi, and Pendu, who were then cooking our evening meal, left their pots burning and ran.

A loosening of Vivienne's hold meant a fall of fifteen to twenty feet on top of the other girl, and then a roll down 300 feet into the sea.

S. could just touch her hand, but was unable, his right hand having to cling to a bush, to exercise sufficient force or to increase his reach, to help her up. It had been possible with the youth, who was less than half her weight. Strange thoughts passed through S.'s mind as he pretended to V. that he was sure help was coming. She was very plucky, but nearly exhausted, and called, "Baba, Baba." At length shouts were heard from the top.

Pendu appeared with long ropes and a rescue party. Baba, evidently rather pleased at the spice of danger, came down the gully. Even he found it very difficult to keep his footing on this loose earth. S. bent down a long-stemmed bush, and held its root end firmly with his right hand and while Baba's right hand held the other end of the bush he bent to pull Vivienne up over the boulder.

Pendu, who is very muscular and active, took the rope down to Anita, who was still standing below. By means of the rope we all climbed to safety, and our little adventure was over. Baba was as happy as a schoolboy who had found a way to rifle some difficult bird's nest.

I have described this at length because it illustrates several things, Baba's love of sport and his fearlessness in danger. The curious situations into which he puts people; the use of ordinary means rather than of strange or occult processes. S. felt that the whole climb was symbolic in some way, and the thought that he ought to have been able to help the girls over the difficulty made him wonder if he had failed Baba. He was not quite sure whether the mishap was intended or whether Baba had taken it for granted that he would be able to follow him up the cleft, etc. Should S. have made some heroic leap, turned his body into a bridge, or made a rope of his scanty clothing?

By now all the party were gathered on top. Vivienne and Anita had been in a very tight corner, and had behaved very pluckily and calmly. To celebrate the event, Baba called us all into the library, retold the story and gave us each with his own hands a sip of Italian wine.[1] The Italian servants (who were present and knew the danger) wept with joy. Baba was very pleased, and said that he had done great work through this adventure. The energies set loose, the feelings aroused, and the courage displayed were utilized by him for his spiritual work. Thus happily ended that day.

On July 24th Baba sailed by the *Conte Verde* for Bombay.

SIXTH VISIT TO THE WEST, 1933

Soon, however, he was to come to Europe again, this time with the intention of going to America. He sailed on September 25th by the *Conte Verde* and reached London on

[1] An extraordinary event, for Baba forbids his disciples to take any intoxicants. Baba's explanation is this: "When I give anything, you should not hesitate to take. I give or not for special reasons."

October 9th, where he stayed for thirteen days, seeing many visitors every day. An entertainment was arranged for him at the "Q" Theatre, and he visited a number of theatres and cinemas.

During this stay in London Baba visited the cottage of one of his disciples who lived in Kent.

The intention of going to America was not fulfilled. On October 22nd Baba left for Spain, staying for a night at Avila, the birth-place of Saint Teresa, and remaining in Madrid for a week, afterwards going to Barcelona, and thence to Marseilles. In Madrid Baba visited a bull-fight. The following is extracted from a diary of this visit:

Baba looked from the windows at villages not unlike those of India only here instead of Mosque and temple were churches and monasteries. It was more like India than any other European country Baba had seen. He was happy to be in Spain. At 6 p.m. we reached Avila.

This was to be our last meal for twenty-four hours. Baba had a very special work to do here, and during our fast we were not to touch him, though we went together for a walk over the hills with him. Shortly before noon the next day we crossed the square and entered the cathedral. Tall grey walls, straight columns of stone supported a high, vaulted roof decorated with gold; the side aisles were like dark tunnels owing to the absence of windows; the nave was arched by a stone rib supporting on high a superb crucifix which was illuminated by shafts of light descending from clerestory windows. Together with Baba we saw the many treasures of the cathedral, we were very exalted, the spiritual atmosphere was not unlike that of Saint Mark's at Venice, or at Assisi. As we left, Baba directed that four silver coins should be given to the sacristan.

We then walked through the city, to visit the shrine of Saint Teresa, built on the side of her former home. The city is small and soon we were outside the crenelated walls; the terrace on which

we stood commanded the plain and exposed the hills to our view. Baba pointed to a hill behind the town and said we should walk there. Climbing up a dusty donkey track we looked back at Avila. The brilliant sun shone on its encircling walls while many bastions threw dark shadows, steep cobbled streets led up to the cathedral-crowned summit. Long ago, before the cathedral was built, Baba had been there and we were now looking for a place on the hill where he used to sit quietly, rest, and meditate. The soil was dry and sandy. At last we came to a small plain that lay between two rocky summits and strangely-shaped boulders. Running from left to right was a long valley six miles wide, few trees and no buildings intruded on the brown plain, behind rose a line of blue downs which to the right extended into a range of mountains (the Sierra Gredos). Their snow-topped peaks must have been fifteen or twenty miles away. The foreground was a sandy, rock-strewn moor, our feet crushed thyme, basil, and herbs whose names were unknown to us. This was the memorable place. Nature and the snow-clad mountains were surely the same. Time seemed to roll away, it was wonderful to be with Baba there. As a remembrance we picked some of the fragrant herbs. On our return we broke the fast and enjoyed a feast of fruits, tea, and wine.

Baba was so happy at Avila. There are in Europe, he explained, as in other countries, holy places, particularly connected with great spiritual working. The four centres are Saint Mark's at Venice, a place on the Ligurian coast in Italy, Assisi, and Avila. We had now visited them all. They were holy ground from which sprang the saints—we naturally thought of Saint Francis, Saint Teresa, and her confessor—Saint John of the Cross. One of us was ordered to return to Avila in ten days and to visit this particular place every day for seven days.

It was essential that Baba should visit this spot and it is interesting to see how it was chosen. First, he never told us that we were to go to Avila; I do not even think that he knew its name. The person who was responsible for arranging the time-table of the Spanish trip decided the matter, having been told that one day

should be spent in a mountain by Baba, he asked the travel bureau for advice. So it might be said that the bureau decided on Avila.

After three hours in the train we reached Madrid at 10.30 p.m. on the evening of the 24th, and went to the hotel that had been chosen by Baba.

The next morning he could not get the hot bath he required. The whole party was rushed up and down the stairs, expostulating with the staff. Many promises. In Spain dinner is eaten at 10 p.m.; they go to bed at midnight or later. Things are put off till to-morrow, and they get up late. Once more D. felt responsible, worried, and guilty. We went to complain to the travel bureau about all our discomforts en route, and got little satisfaction. The food was not as Baba wished. It was not a holiday atmosphere for anyone.

He wished to come in contact with the masses. All day we walked along the crowded streets of Madrid until our feet were tired. It is a beautiful city, the air is clear, bracing, and cool. A brilliant sun poured down, and like Orientals the people lounged in the streets. Dark-skinned, polite, and unhurried, there was none of that fret and tension that we find in the industrialized cities of Europe to-day. Sumptuous public buildings and avenues contrasted with very poorly clad people in the streets. In this respect not unlike Moscow. Baba particularly loved to stand in the central square, Puerta del Sol, the Gate of the Sun, among the crowds. Every day and several times a day he came here. Sometimes as we walked, despite his normal appearance, European clothes, and Spanish beret which concealed his hair, they would turn and stare at him as if drawn by something they could not understand.

That night we went to the East End, to a cabaret, a rather low-class dance hall; along the side tables were seated many Mary Magdalenes, and on the stage appeared some wonderful Spanish dancers. Many of the party were very anxious to see the old national dances; they were happy. Baba's presence at such a place might seem shocking, but then we have little conception of the scope of his work.

The next morning we ran to the hot-water taps. We had been promised boiling water and hoped that our fingers would register an increase of temperature. Tragedy. Baba was upset and the weight of his displeasure once more fell on the head of D. He could not work here, he would leave for Marseilles. So this was our holiday!

After all, why should one who was without desires make so much fuss about such trivial matters as hot baths and food? As he himself had chosen the hotel, why blame others who do not claim to be all-knowing? We went to look for another hotel, frantic cablegrams and long-distance 'phone calls; we found another hotel. Strange to relate, we found that the travel bureau had chosen the very hotel that Baba himself had rejected. We moved to the Hotel Londres; it was ideal and Baba's rooms overlooked the Gate of the Sun.

Baba explained to D. He (D.) had faults, egoism, and weaknesses, these scenes were manufactured in order to stir up the feelings, and according to the way in which we bore them Baba could work on our characters, and perhaps in some way he could use the energies and emotions liberated for spiritual work. If D. had refused to be taken in and had exploded and said that it was an unnecessary fuss, "If you want to go to Marseilles, go," Baba would have had to find another way of stirring the feelings. It was but part of the great game. The sun shone once more.

Baba was now happy. We walked miles; every day we visited at least one cinema and sometimes a theatre as well; also the Prado Art Gallery where he was pleased to see right through the centuries preoccupation with the life of Jesus and the saints. El Greco, Velasquez, Goya—once again we had that sensation of Time rolled away as Baba looked at the pictures of the past. We bought many reproductions and sent them to those who were not with us. At the Theatre Español we saw Argentina dance in De Falla's ballet, and some magnificent peasant dances; we enjoyed that performance best of all.

Our visit to the royal palace was marred by an incident that

tells against us. When we were about to enter the royal apartments, Baba was stopped because he would not take off his hat.[1] Baba expects us to know without asking. So when some asked if they should stay with him or go quickly round without him, he said, "Go." Three went and ran round the tedious state rooms; when they got outside they discovered that they had done wrong to leave Baba to wait outside meanwhile. Baba allowed them to feel their error and then brushed it from his mind.

The Hotel Londres was wonderful. But Baba began to complain that there was not enough garlic and pepper in the food. It was N.'s department; before every meal-time she would be in a state of suspense, rushing up and down three flights of steps, into the kitchen, talking to the staff in a mixture of tongues. The hotel people must have thought us quite crazy, but were still very kind. In this way did Baba stir N.'s feelings. Of course, he always said when he played these jokes on us, "Don't worry, don't be upset." It is as if someone stuck a pin into you and said, "Don't mind, I am not hurting you." N. stood it all wonderfully. But for the last four days of our stay every dish we ate was littered with garlic; apart from this the food was wonderful.

Night after night we went to the cinema, the decision and bookings were T.'s job. One evening we visited a theatre in the working quarter, beforehand we walked through the poor streets and Baba was happy. A third-rate, bare-backed musical comedy, sitting in the front stalls there was no escaping all its implications. Finally its utter boredom was relieved by a pleasant scene in which they sang those long plaintive folk-songs that betray the influence of the Moors on Spain. Baba liked these. Then we went to a highbrow German Ufa film about submarines; unfortunately we had to sit in the second row. This enabled Baba to stir up the feelings of T., how he would not let Baba see the films he liked; he had got bad seats, he was sent to change them—a difficult task to do when the house is crowded and you can't speak Spanish. The next night we took him to see an American comedy; he was happy.

[1] Because he would not expose his long hair and arouse the curiosity of strangers.

Baba spoke to each of us about the special work which we were to do when we returned to London. The sun shone day after day. The last three mornings we walked down from the plateau on which Madrid is built, crossed the River Manzanares, and climbed the opposite hill to the beautiful moors and park.

From these hills there is in the clear air of Spain a marvellous panorama, distant snow-clad ranges, the fine buildings of the city, autumn-tinged trees, rolling hills, and plains. Below are the former royal parks, gardens, and a small lake. The last day we walked to the highest hill, and there beneath a large olive tree we sat around Baba on the ground. He spoke to us of the future and of how all his followers should be partners in all his work. On this beautiful sunlit hill, seated on the ground, once again time seemed to roll away—the scene might have been anywhere.

During our journey to Spain some of the party had mentioned a desire to see a bull-fight, others were not in favour of it. Our last Sunday a bull-fight was held in the afternoon at the Hippodrome. Baba told us to book seats. As the first bull came in one of the ladies began to clutch her neighbour's arm and shriek every time there was a possibility of anything happening. One of the Indian boys began to look very green. Baba was bored and thought it childish. After the second bull was killed we left, that is before the real entertainment had begun. They were all disappointed, but Baba said that his work was accomplished there so it was unnecessary to stay longer.

We left Madrid on the 31st and arrived at Barcelona on November 1st early in the morning. That day Madrid had sent a special delegate to authorize Catalonia to administer its own laws, and this was the day, the hour, and the place. There was a great procession of all the notables of the district and Baba looked from the upper balustrade as they marched in state up the Gothic staircase. It was the seal on the new federal State. Barcelona is the biggest city in Spain, the richest and the most advanced, industrially. This was one more example of coincidence. None of us knew that this ceremony was to take place. With our guide we

then took the bus to the summit of Mount Tibidabo (1,700 feet). From the terrace the view is magnificent. The vast semicircle of the blue Mediterranean, before us the rectangular blocks of buildings and wide streets leading to the docks, on the right the small wooded park of Montjuich, on the left and behind, the great ranges of the Pyrenees. They were far off and between lay small hills and wide valleys with pleasant white towns and villages scattered over them. We had to stay, so the bus was sent away. We had lunch and walked round the hill. Behind we saw the strange mountain of Montserrat (associated with the legend of the Grail and St. Ignatius). After a vegetarian lunch we walked down the hill, jumping along steep paths like goats, and running (Kaka far behind). We passed delightful camping-grounds. B. stopped and was so pleased at the climate, the beauty, the sunshine, and the air that he said next time we should all come and stay here together. He sighed and thought of those who were absent, and of how they would have loved it. We reached the lower slopes and took a tram.

In the centre of Barcelona is a magnificent Plaza de Cataluna, much traffic, and many people. There among the crowd we sat in a café (as in Rome), then we walked along the thronged streets while dusk passed and the city lights were lit. Always masses of people, little they knew who walked in their midst. His work done, we went to the station and left at 7 p.m. on November 2nd. We arrived at Marseilles the next morning at 7 a.m. Enid from Milan and Otto from Zürich were there to meet us. To the Hotel Bristol for bath and breakfast, then Baba had private conversations with each. We were so happy and conscious of an exceptional flow of love and power so great and marked that we all felt overjoyed and lifted up for days afterwards. At noon we were on the *Viceroy of India*, together in his cabin we sat in silence at his feet, our hearts too full to speak. The cabin was full of silence, outside on the dock someone played on a concertina.

On November 2nd Baba left for India on the *Viceroy of India*, arriving on the 14th. He went to Nasik, and at the end

of the month he moved his headquarters back to Meherabad. There he remained practically in seclusion, receiving visitors only on Thursdays for three hours in the morning.

SEVENTH VISIT TO THE WEST, 1934

Baba remained at Meherabad during the early months of this year, paying a visit to Bangalore and to the Nandi Hills in April. On the way he stayed for some days at Bombay, seeing a number of people, but he left quietly, not wishing to be recognized, by the Madras express, travelling third class as usual, taking the usual paraphernalia included in all Baba's journeys—cooking utensils, buckets, lamps, etc. He returned at the beginning of May. On June 9th Baba left India by the *Mongolia* for Marseilles. This was a tourist-class ship, and some difficulty was experienced in arranging for Baba to have his meals in his cabin according to his custom. He reached Marseilles on the 22nd, where he was met by several English and American disciples. He stayed in Paris three days, receiving many visitors and discussing the arrangements for a film he desired to have made. He arrived in London on June 26th, and went to a private house at Hampstead. There he stayed for six days, afterwards going to Zürich, where he remained for ten days, many people coming to see him; he spent one day in seclusion on the mountain. He sailed from Marseilles on the 20th on the *Strathanaver* for India, arriving at Bombay on August 2nd. Large numbers of people were seen on these visits in Paris, London, and Zürich.

SECOND WORLD TOUR, 1934–5

Baba made his eighth visit to Europe in November, when he sailed on the 15th on the *Tuscania*, arriving in London on

the 30th. This was the night of the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and the party drove through the crowded streets past Buckingham Palace, through Hyde Park and the West End. He was visited by many people. He left for America on December 5th by the *Majestic*, arriving in New York on the 12th, where he stayed for two days, afterwards going to Hollywood, which was reached on the 18th. He was returning to Hollywood after two and a half years, and there were many people waiting to see him; but his visit was kept as quiet as possible, he devoting most of his time to interviews in connection with the projected film. But the making of the film was abandoned next year, for a film of this kind could not be made under the prevailing conditions of film production.

On January 18, 1935, Baba left Hollywood for Vancouver, whence he sailed by the *Empress of Canada* for India; the ship was one day later than schedule, and Baba had to embark within four hours, arriving at Hong Kong on February 2nd, thence the same day by the *Fushimi Maru* for Colombo, which was reached on the 13th. Baba travelled by the land route to Ahmednagar, via Madras, and by the 16th was back at Meherabad, where his birthday was not celebrated as usual at his express wish.

SECLUSION

Baba then began making arrangements for going into seclusion for one year. For a period of four months, from March to June, instructions were given with regard to the Mandali living at Meherabad and the hundreds of other people who were dependent upon him. During this period he travelled constantly to Ahmednagar, Nasik, Poona, Bombay, Madras, and other places where his followers lived.

He had become very frail, for not only had the long journey to and from California tried him, but on the voyage from Hong Kong to Colombo in the Japanese ship *Fushimi Maru* he had entered upon a fast, living only upon milk. He continued the fast for a month after reaching Meherabad. He was also doing without much sleep during the whole of this time. For a few days he went to a quiet place near Igatpuri, at the Ghoti dak-bungalow in the mountains, but in three days he was back again in Nasik.

Baba selected his place of retirement after making those nearest to him gather information about many of the mountainous places and hill stations of India. He insisted on the most thorough inquiries being made, usually wanting to know details that had been overlooked or regarded as unnecessary. All the time he had said he would go to the north-east, towards the Himalayas, but until the last moment he would give no further indication of his intentions, beyond saying that he would stop at another place for a short time en route.

He selected two of the Mandali to accompany him. One of these companions had not spoken for seven years, conveying his ideas by means of signs and gestures, using also an alphabet of finger-signs, which he had himself invented, which was so ingenious that only a few of the Mandali could read it. The other was a man of tough physique, accustomed to an abstemious life and able to stand hardships. The two were given detailed and repeated instructions as to what was expected of them. A third companion was also selected at the last moment to accompany the others for a certain distance.

The party of three with Baba left Bombay on June 7th. Only one person knew the details of the route and the destination. None of the devotees in Bombay or elsewhere was allowed to know of his destination, except that he was going to the Himalayas. They started by rail in the lowest



SHRI MEHER BABA
PORTOFINO, 1933



SHRI MEHER BABA AFTER
LEAVING MOUNT ABU, 1935

class, and in the heat of summer, towards the Abu mountains. Next day they arrived at the Abu road station and reached the hill station in the late evening. The party put up at the rest-house, and in the morning set out to find a suitable place in which Baba could retire in seclusion.

Mount Abu (home of the gods) is about one hundred and fifteen miles from Ahmedabad and seventeen miles from the railway. Its highest peak, Guru Sikhar (the hermit's peak) is about 5,600 feet. The climate is healthy, the scenery magnificent, and the mountain range contains many ancient monuments. Baba decided to stay on the hill Ambika, called the Mother of Abu, where there is a small whitewashed temple. There is a beautiful little cave on this hill, carved to form a small room, with a small hut near. This is one of many caves in the neighbourhood in which ascetics and sadhus have meditated for years past. They are thus considered to be holy places. It seems that this particular cave had been used by one of Baba's devotees, who was ordered to go there. Thus the name of Baba was well known, and the keeper of the temple was overjoyed to hear that someone had come from Baba. Baba stayed there disguised as one of his own disciples, and saw nobody. The place was not an easy one in which to live, for the winds were strong and cold and the water contained much salt and was hard to digest; Baba continued to live on milk.

After about six weeks Baba declared to his three companions —for the third still remained with them—that the work for which he had gone there was finished, and that he would leave immediately to start work again elsewhere. The news startled his hearers, and, after discussing with them where he should go, Baba surprised them still further by saying that he would return to Meherabad to continue his work.

It should be noted that before leaving Meherabad Baba had

given instructions that a new cabin should be prepared for him, as the old one had almost collapsed. This was to be a wooden cabin in an isolated corner on the hill. He had just heard that the cabin was ready.

The return was kept secret, and the journey started immediately, Baba with one companion travelling for the most of the way second class to be in as much seclusion as possible, the other two travelling third class as usual. He passed through Bombay unknown to anybody, and left the train at Dhond, fifty miles from Ahmednagar, travelling the remaining distance by car so that he should not be recognized. Thus he returned to Meherabad, where, he said, the foundations for great spiritual work had already been laid.

Baba then went into seclusion, seeing very few people.

THE MASTER'S DEVOTION

In February 1936 Baba was in Madras on his birthday, and before he left Meherabad he had given strict instructions that there was to be no observance of his birthday by anyone. This happened for the second year in succession. Later it is said that on the actual day of the birthday anniversary his Master, Upasni Maharaj, went to Ahmednagar to the house of one of his own disciples, and as usual went to the special room kept for his visits where there was a photograph of Baba. To the surprise of all he went up to the photograph and said to Gulmai (mother of Rustam and Adi, Baba's disciples), "Meher is my loving child. Tell him that I have been here on his birthday and waved his arti myself." Then he performed the ceremony. A remarkable incident, and considered to be the reason why Baba did not allow others to observe the occasion; for it is said that what a Master does he does for all.

THE MAD ASHRAM

A new phase of Baba's work now opens. He went into seclusion at Rahuri, a town twenty-three miles from Meherabad on the road between Ahmednagar and Nasik, and while there arranged for a trust to be created to take charge of the various ashrams in different parts of India and to look after the persons and families dependent upon him. A new property was purchased at Nasik, with the object of providing an ashram for Western disciples.

Baba took with him to Rahuri a few selected members of the Mandali, and there he gathered together a number of mad or "mast" (spiritually intoxicated) people, whom he waited upon with his own hands, feeding, bathing, and clothing them. These people are all indigent. They are accommodated in special huts, about six being there at a time, though Baba intends to have as many as fifty. During this period Baba retires at midnight and rises at 4 a.m. His object is to restore these spiritually mad people to normal consciousness, so that they may be his vehicles for creating higher consciousness in others. Life in Rahuri is very simple; and the work of looking after these people is exacting, for they would ordinarily be regarded as human derelicts and abnormalities. Except for his attention to these people, Baba is in strict seclusion; no interviews are granted, and no darshan is allowed.

A NEW PHASE

In the middle of October Baba set out on another visit to the West. As the visit was for a short time only so as to interrupt the work at Rahuri as little as possible, he with two disciples travelled by air from Karachi to Baghdad, intending

to go thence by train. But there was a breakdown on the line, and Baba had to stay two days at Baghdad. There he got together a crowd of crippled and diseased beggars and fed them. The journey was resumed, though with great discomfort, for the railway service was disorganized, and the party arrived in London on November 3rd, Baba being very exhausted, for after his long period of fasts and seclusion he was extremely weak and his two companions were much concerned about his health. The day after his arrival in London he appeared as well as ever, and, staying only three days, he went to Zürich and Paris, afterwards joining the *Viceroy of India* at Marseilles, reaching India before the end of the month. The visit was strictly private.

Baba's object in coming to London was to arrange for disciples from England and America to go to the new ashram at Nasik. This was accomplished, and the first party left at the beginning of December. "I want them with me," he said, "because the time is at hand for me to do much work, and I want them to share my work."

At present, therefore, there are three main centres of Baba's activities: the Meherabad colony, the Western ashram at Nasik, and the "mad" ashram at Rahuri.








THE "MAD" ASHRAM AT RAHURI, 1936

PART III

THE PERFECT MASTER

To let this account of the life of Baba speak for itself should be sufficient; but to do that would be to neglect some part of what the reader will expect of me. I propose to offer an explanation of what this man of whom I am writing seems to mean. A large part of the story I have told in the foregoing pages may appear incomprehensible to some readers, much of it even nonsensical, and many questions are bound to be raised. I cannot pretend to answer every question that the curious reader may wish to ask about Baba, but I want to suggest what attitude can be adopted towards him. On rational and commonsense grounds I do not know that any attitude but that of scepticism can be taken. Those who are prepared to apply only the tests of scientific investigation, and to regard him from the point of view of the material world, will get very little from him that will please them. I do not oppose their attitude, but it is not my own. It appears to me that he has to be looked at with an eye that is ready to see more than ordinary sight can make visible, that is to say, with the eye of insight, and to be approached as perhaps witnessing to more than earthly truth. If that be done, possibilities are opened up which cannot be measured. Baba's concern, if he be what he says he is, is not with the world of the senses, so that he cannot be judged merely by them. That, at any rate, is the attitude I wish to suggest to the reader as being the most useful for any serious consideration of this unusual and perplexing personality.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

I met Baba on his first visit to England in 1931, on the day of his arrival at the house in Devonshire to which he came. Until a few days earlier I had not heard of his existence. He was awaited with intense excitement. I found him unaffected and natural, and he impressed me as being exceptionally self-poised and with marked ease of manner. He took everything as a matter of course, and yet seemed to bestow meaning on the most casual things. I observed some who were present to be overcome with emotion, but though I liked him at once and was drawn to him, I felt no strong emotional effect. Emotional disturbance is common in those who are brought into contact with him, a matter to which I shall refer again.

Baba is a small man, five feet six inches in height, slight in build, with a rather large head or a head that appears to be large, an aquiline nose, and an olive complexion. He is extremely animated, has a mobile face, constantly smiles, and has expressive hands and gestures. He creates the opposite of a sense of remoteness or strangeness, making an immediately friendly appeal to those who meet him. He is indeed disarming in his obvious simplicity, and the atmosphere that surrounds him might be described as that of innocence. He is childlike and mischievous as well as innocent. I discovered, and others have told me, that he is a superb actor with quickly changing moods.

At times he appears serious and worried, and I have seen him look tired and ill. At such moments he has an air of intense preoccupation. At other times, and normally, he seems to have no cares whatever and invites confidence. His physical changes are rapid: one day he will be ill and worn; the next, well, youthful-looking, and lively.

His hair is long, and he lets it grow rather wild. In the

West he keeps it covered as best he can under a hat when he goes outdoors; but it must be confessed that any hat looks odd upon that abundant hair; and he dresses in ordinary European clothes, but indoors usually wears a white Indian garment.

He is a strict vegetarian, takes no alcohol, and does not smoke. Though his tastes in food are simple, he is often difficult to please. Sometimes in Italy the housekeepers would plan a delicious meal of rice, vegetables cooked with hot spices, lentils, grapes, peaches, green figs, and orange juice. To make happy those who had prepared the meal he would say it was delicious; but afterwards it would be noticed that he had barely nibbled at a few dishes. The only evidence of eating would be a slice of bread with a hole in the centre. He eats, but seems to have no desire for eating.

He rises early in the morning, and, unless he is in seclusion, almost invariably has one or more disciples sleeping in the same room with him. Unless he is in seclusion he takes a great deal of exercise, walking rapidly several miles every day, and even in seclusion he walks continually up and down the cell or room in which he confines himself. He loves mountain-climbing.

He reads and speaks English and four other languages fluently. His use of English is that of a cultivated man. He has read much English literature, especially Shakespeare and the poets, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. He knows, of course, the Persian and Indian poets, his favourite being Hafiz. He has himself written many poems and songs, though not of high literary order. He has considerable taste for music, preferring, of course, Indian music, but liking Western music too. At times he has Indian drums and other musical instruments with him on his travels on which his disciples play, and also a gramophone. Before his silence he often sang.

Indian music differs greatly from Western music. It is improvised or composed by the player himself, and is played usually only to a few, the audience being directly in the player's mind. Music is recognized as a part of life, and is practised not only as a religious act but to recover and establish the rhythm upon which life, to be in harmony, must move.

He is fond of games, particularly of a spiritual game based on the evolution of the soul, called "atya-patya." He plays many indoor games, including table-tennis, and is particularly fond of ball games outdoors. When he plays he is, say his disciples, "No master, but one of us." He delights in the presence of children and romps with them as one of themselves.

He is a strict disciplinarian over those who are nearest to him, not the slightest departure from the rules he lays down being overlooked. He is methodical about business and attends to every detail himself. He makes a practice of requiring apparently impossible things to be done, even what may seem to be trifling and unnecessary. Sometimes, for instance, in the most awkward places he will ask for food; in a train, perhaps, just as it is about to start, he will ask for hot milk, and his disciple must fetch it even though it may mean almost certain missing of the train. His disciples have said to me, however, that he never orders what is really beyond their power to do.

He takes almost incredible quantities of luggage with him on his travels, most of it perhaps never being opened. He changes his arrangements constantly, so that none of those with him knows exactly what is to happen from day to day. As an instance of his relation to his followers and what he expects of them, the following incident is related by one who was in the party at Santa Margherita in the summer of 1932:

One day Baba wished to walk to a distant beach for bathing. The party got strung out along the road. Baba did not like this,

and called us back. He suddenly stopped and indicated that he wished to get down on to the seashore. Y. looked over the embankment wall and saw that it was a private beach, the owner had left cushions and a flask of wine in his beach tent, and would obviously return in a moment. He protested that Baba could not risk the indignity of trepassing with our motley crew on someone's private terrain. K. insisted that Baba's slightest whim must be obeyed, and so they descended the steps. Y. was furiously indignant with K. and the stupidity of it all, and went to sit down much further along the beach. He refused all entreaties and even Baba's commands to return. His feelings were churned up, and he felt desperate. After some time he gave in, and came back very sheepishly to the tent. Baba severely reprimanded him in the presence of the others. During his absence he had failed to meet an old Italian who had stood, gazing respectfully at Baba, taking off his hat three times. This man was the twin in appearance of an agent in Warsaw that Y. had to identify in a month's time.

Before descending to the beach, Y., who was for a moment walking side by side with Baba, had passed but had not looked at the white-haired old man. We never saw him again, a fact that led to considerable difficulty later in Warsaw.

Y. admitted his error in disobeying, but he said, "Surely we should use our common sense and warn you when you are likely to put yourself in a false position." Baba agreed. "It was your duty to warn me, but should I still insist, you must give way." When the homily was completed and harmony restored, we were still seated around, but not actually inside the tent. At that moment the rather indignant owner came down the steps with two large dogs, and reminded us that it was a private beach.

As will have been observed from the preceding chapters, Baba fasts frequently for long or short periods. During these times of fasting he sometimes sees no one except the two or three disciples appointed to attend upon him; neither, as a rule, does he attend to any outside affairs, though he does

not neglect any detail concerning the Mandali around him. The fast consists of entire absence from solid food, and he takes as a rule only a little weak tea, and sometimes, though not often, a little milk.

What is the object of fasting? In such periods he is engaged, he declares, in spiritual activities. Fasting means to become detached from the world and to cease physical activities of every description as much as possible. The object is not to mortify or punish the flesh, but to increase the strength and intensity of spiritual energy. It is to withdraw from the plane of this world so that power may be concentrated on the inner, or non-material, planes. In all religions fasting plays a part in religious practice and discipline. It is not for himself that Baba fasts but for the sake of others. As a result of fasting Baba naturally becomes weak, and, as I have pointed out earlier, suffers in a normal physical way, though not always, for at times he does more physical work than usual during fasts.

His most striking personal characteristic is his silence, which started on July 10, 1925. Since then, instead of speaking, he has used an alphabet-board, and points to the letters to convey what he has to say. He uses abbreviations, and a variety of signs and gestures with his hands to indicate certain words, so that to anyone familiar with his ways he expresses himself almost as quickly as by speech. When he receives visitors, there is usually an interpreter present to explain what he says, but he frequently allows visitors to follow him closely on the alphabet-board and to read for themselves.

To keep silence is common among Indian holy men, though few except yogis practise it for lengthy periods, or for any other purpose than that for which they impose other vows of abstinence or physical disability upon themselves. Baba did

not undertake silence in accordance with a vow. He makes no vows. In Sanscrit the word "Muni," which means "philosopher," means also "the silent one," for no words can express what he who knows has seen. Said the Sufi teacher Junayd, "He who knows God is dumb." Baba is silent, he says, as he fasts, for the sake of others. As I understand him, he maintains complete silence for the purpose of concentrating the libido. Silence increases power because libido is not expended in speech, which is a most potent conveyer of the life-power of individuals. Through speech there is expression, the soul unfolds itself, but also through speech the vital psychic powers are discharged. In silence, which is not due to mere inertia or to the lack of something to say, there is more complete control over expression and a much more highly-concentrated direction of psychic energies than is to be found by other means.

I do not understand that Baba intends always to remain silent. He has repeatedly declared that he will speak when the time comes. He made a definite promise to speak in Hollywood in July 1932, after completing seven years' silence, but he did not keep the promise. He intends to speak, he says, at the moment of grave crisis for the world. That moment is rapidly approaching; for we have reached a decisive period in human history.

His silence is certainly partly symbolic, and confirms his denial of the function of teacher. A silent man obviously is no teacher. And when he also ceases to write, as Baba did in 1927, there can be no doubt that he does not seek to teach. By his silence Baba draws attention to the spiritual significance of his presence and is more dynamic than he could otherwise be; thus he both attracts and stirs up people. In other words, he awakens. It should be remembered that in the East the avoidance of words and explanations is a recognized technique

in spiritual training. The guru or teacher often gives no answers to his disciples' questions, for what is to be known cannot be revealed in words.

HIS METHODS

This brings me to Baba's methods. What is his work? To transform human consciousness from the illusion of the world and the self to the reality of the spirit and God; or, to put it another way, to enable men to know by experience the truth of the Infinite Self which is in all. In particular, it is to train and perfect a few disciples, which is its personal aspect, and to establish contacts with individuals, which is its world aspect. I said to him on one occasion, "What do you ask of those who come into contact with you?" He replied, "To realize the self through love." I said, "What do you ask of your disciples?" His answer was, "To follow strictly my instructions to the same end." He added, "I ask this of close disciples only."

Baba's work, therefore, is to awaken people to the realization of their true selves. That means, to put it shortly, to be as he is. Is not the trouble with all of us not that we do not want awakening, but that we do not know how it should be done? Yet this confession of ignorance is merely a defence against the demand for action. We are full of dissatisfaction with ourselves and with others, yet are not ready to accept the simple truth: we want an unnecessary something before we can act. The fact is that nothing is necessary but action in the right spirit, that is with the right desire. To be ignorant means that one does not desire sufficiently, otherwise all obstacles would be overcome.

When people come to Baba, they are asked to sit near him.

He looks at them; the "look" is, of course, important. As I have already explained, he usually touches the visitor's hand or caresses his arm. Perhaps he will do no more than smile at him. Perhaps he will say, "I like you," which he varies by saying, "I am pleased," or "I am very pleased." There is much significance in the physical contact. Baba's touch is not a mere sign of affection; it is intended to raise the vibrations of consciousness. He will say, "Do not worry. I am with you." He never asks questions except to say, "Have you anything to ask me?" Frequently people come to see him with their minds full of questions, but when they sit before him they have nothing to say. This is easily to be understood, for we know the answer to our questions before we ask them. If people tell Baba their troubles, he will advise them what to do. He always repeats, "Do not worry."

One visitor, well-known on the stage, who saw Baba on his first visit to London in 1931, made a note of the interview at the time, and as it is characteristic it is worth recording. He says:

We went upstairs to the top floor of the house and I was aware of a great many people passing to and fro. I had to wait outside the door for a little while and then I was taken into the room. Baba was seated, cross-legged, on a bed near the window, there were several people in the room and one woman was sitting opposite, crying. I only vaguely noticed them and wished they were elsewhere. I was, however, engrossed in looking at this man, and they faded away.

What most impressed me was his rather wild air as of something untamed and his truly remarkable eyes.

He smiled and motioned me to sit down beside him on his right. He took me by the left hand and then from time to time patted my shoulder and stroked my arm. We sat in silence and I was aware of a feeling of love and peace emanating from him, also a

curious sense of recognition as of having found a long lost friend.

Then Baba took my left hand and some sort of current of strength passed from him to me. It was as if a current of Pure Love was turned on; it filled me with ecstasy. I began to breathe deeply as if taking an anaesthetic. . . . It was as if I had been baptized by him. . . . There were many things I should have liked to ask him, but all questions seemed unnecessary and later I felt that many of them were answered without words. . . .

My subsequent visits were never so vivid or impressive as the first, but the flame which was kindled burnt with a steady glow. . . .

Another who met him on his first visit to New York, a woman, also connected with the stage, says:

When I met Baba for the first time, the first sentence he said was "Do not worry." I was amazed. Anybody else can say "Do not worry," but when Baba says it, it works. One realizes it. From that hour onward it was a power within. It created a wonderful stability.

With one exception, to which I am about to refer, there are, as may be supposed, no records of any interviews, except those made by the persons concerned, of which I have seen a great many; the exception is a series of notes made in 1934, when one of his disciples with a wide knowledge of European languages acted as translator during interviews at Zürich. The following accounts of forty-three interviews are extracted from these notes:

1. A paralysed workman from whose narrative it appeared that he had done some yoga practices which had taught him to accept things as they came, and to feel happy under all conditions.

B. It is not the paralysis of the body that matters, but paralysis of the mind that retards the soul. . . . Yoga practices do not matter much. . . . He has to learn much yet, to progress in spirituality. I will help spiritually.

2. A woman student of psychology who had read about Baba, but was afraid to approach him on account of unconventional ideas. She said that she could not think of Jesus.

B. Why bother about the *physical* Christ . . . if she can't get that idea as clearly as she wants. If she can't picture him, she can *feel* the Christ within. That means the idea of pure love.

Q. She has read the Sermon on the Mount, but can't get a clear conception of him.

B. I will help her. Do one thing. Immediately she gets up every morning, let her have this thought, "Christ is within me," and leave the rest to me. I will help her spiritually.

Q. She said that she had to struggle hard with her husband, who is a Dutch philosopher . . . and who would not let her come, because he and the family thought it was not advisable. They objected to her coming, not agreeing with the ways in which Baba's coming and visits, etc., were announced. However, she managed to come, but was upset and disappointed that she could not feel Baba as she wanted, and get help from him, as she expected.

B. She should have thought of me at the time of her worries, and I could have helped her. But don't worry. Anyhow, she has come and this contact will help her.

3. A daughter of a clergyman.

Q. I am happy to see you.

B. Not nervous? Anything to ask or say?

Q. She has doubts about you; and also cannot understand why Western religion calls the Eastern confusing.

B. And the Eastern people say the same about Western religion: everyone thinks his own religion the best. This is ignorance. Jesus never meant that. What does religion mean? To find God within. What did Jesus teach? To find him within and not to carry on wars: as his own followers have been doing.

Q. How can we realize that?

B. Through love, and helping others selflessly. It is very easy; if you think less of yourself and more of others, it is so easy. No matter if she doubts me, or does not even believe in me. I will help her.

Q. She wants to believe in you and has faith in you.

B. But why! If what you want is *within*, you will find it only there! And my aim is only to help you find it, whether you follow me or not.

Q. But it is difficult.

B. I will help you, even if you don't want it. When the sun is high up, and you feel hot, you cannot avoid it. It shines on you even if you don't want it. It is a question of going out of yourself to help others. This contact will help you greatly. My blessings.

4. A lady interested in human welfare. She was silent.

B. Ask if she wants to speak about anything with me.

She nodded refusal.

B. I understand, because what can explanations mean when interior help is at hand? Real help is spiritual help, and not words and explanations. She feels. I will help her.

The visitor lays her hand in Baba's and sits there for about a minute, then he asks her to leave, with his usual sign, and she goes away much affected.

5. A man who has a confession written in German which he presents to Baba.

B. I'll read it later at leisure. There is no time now, I will answer what you say and help you spiritually.

Q. He doesn't want to talk: in fact, he wants to *feel.*

B. If I had time, I should have answered his questions and have also given him five minutes to sit near me. However, because he wants to feel, I give him one minute.

He sits by Baba silently for a couple of minutes, after which he is asked to leave.

6. A nurse who has some fears in life which she discloses to Baba.

Q. Oh, I am so happy to see you . . . I am so tired of life, and very unhappy. . . . I don't see how I can improve!

B. Everyone is unconsciously tired of this life, because everyone seeks happiness, but knows not how to get it. But life is beautiful! It is meant to be happy. I will help you. Then things will appear changed. You will see it. It is always the outlook that counts, and not the object. To-day you feel tired, upset, seeing nothing beautiful in things around you in life. If to-morrow you do not feel bored, but cheerful, it will be due to changed outlook. The easy way is *not* to make much of things. Take them lightly. Say to yourself, "I am meant to be happy, to make others happy," and gradually you become happier, and make others happier too. Don't suggest to your mind, "I am tired, haggard, depressed," etc. That will make you worse. Always say, "All is well; I will be happy." I will help you. I can and I will. You will feel it.

7. A married lady who has a very good nature.

B. She has a very good heart.

Q. I wish it could be better.

B. This longing is good, and this contact will make it better as she wishes. I will help her spiritually. She will feel it.

8. A man presents a written statement—confessions of the confused state of his life, which makes him believe that he is fallen and utterly broken.

B. I know. No need to tell me, and I will explain. Don't worry. When one is meant for spiritual advancement, one has either love or lust to the *extreme*. This lust must be converted into love. What is lust but a craving of the physical senses, and love is the craving of the soul. I know all about you and will spiritually help you. Never think that you have fallen so as not to rise again.

B. Does he want to ask anything more?

Q. He thanks you very much. He got the answer that he wanted, and feels much relieved.

9. A young woman.

B. Wonderful soul. (She stares at Baba.) Does she want to ask anything?

Q. What must I do for a better life with my mother, who does not approve of what I do?

B. Think more of her, and less of yourself. That will adjust matters, because even if you think at times that your mother is in the wrong, and you are in the right, or that sometimes she is in the right, and you are in the wrong, still it matters little if you think of her. In short, think less of yourself and more of others. Real happiness is to make others happy.

After a moment's silence, Baba added: Very dear soul, I will help her spiritually.

Q. Thank you very much. I am so happy to have met you.

She asks, before leaving, whether she should tell her mother regarding her feeling for Baba, and if so, when.

B. Yes, I know. But not for a few days. Later on you can, you will feel, I will tell you somehow.

10. A woman. Nervous? asks Baba. Tell her to be rested. She explains her situation and says she seems to be in love with a church pianist, and asks if that friendship is to be kept up.

B. Where's the harm?

Q. Catholic law prevents marriage with a man who is divorced. The Church is against. . . . That's the conflict.

B. But do they love each other?

Q. Yes.

B. Then love is all that matters if there is no lust. I see no harm in it. Let that love grow so that it makes two souls one. I will help her spiritually to make this love grow purer.

11. A woman painter. After the usual greetings.

B. I am also a painter. I paint the hearts of people with colours of spirituality. She is a good soul.

Q. She feels she has a guilty heart.

B. No. She is not guilty as she believes. Everyone has weaknesses; but it is the heart that counts. She need not worry. I will help her spiritually.

Tears in her eyes.

12. A woman who came to ask to develop the divine within her. She felt she could not achieve it alone.

B. She will, by my help. Never be disheartened. It is all within, and I will help her to realize it. I am so happy to see her longing for spiritual attainment.

Q. She does not know anything but this, and asks for nothing else.

B. I am so happy to know this.

Q. How can spirituality be attained?

B. It cannot be attained by intellect, but by heart and feeling and inner experience. Do one thing. Every night, just before retiring, think for one minute, "*The infinite God is within me, and I am part of the Infinite.*"

13. A man who has lost an eye.

B. Any questions?

Q. What he craves for is the contact. Questions are therefore unnecessary.

B. Yes, it is true. If it is true that I know everything, then there is no need to ask me. And if you feel I do *not* know what is the use of asking me?

Q. He has no doubts as to your powers and knowledge.

B. I will help him spiritually. I like him very, very much.

Q. He has gone through terrible times and struggles.

B. I know. He has a very good heart, and my help will make him understand.

14. A woman who with her husband is in a critical financial position.

Q. Her husband has to fight for material things.

B. I know; but it will be all right. He has a good heart, although he has weaknesses, and I will make matters change. Don't worry.

Q. She asks for spiritual strength in her needs.

B. Yes, it will come. I will help.

15. An old woman artist.

Q. It is puzzling, for at times when one desires good, bad comes out. Must one feel responsible for the bad results of good work?

B. The essential is to desire good.

Q. She wishes so much to speak to people who should be helped.

B. Always think of helping and not of results. Never worry about results, because "selfless service" means trying to help others, not even thinking that "I am doing this or that."

Q. People misunderstand her good motives.

B. Always work with your heart for the best, and don't worry. The world crucified Christ.

Q. She has the strength to fight it all, but still worries.

B. The fighting is good, but worrying is unnecessary. Remember what I tell you and try to follow it, and I will help you spiritually.

16. An artist, a very fine man and much interested.

B. Happy to see you.

Q. Explains that he has waited for this meeting. He has encountered opposition in many directions.

B. There lies the "fun of the game," to face and encounter difficulty. If not, life becomes dull and monotonous. One can find spirituality only through opposition. One encountering opposition in life becomes enduring, determined, and unaffected like the wall

that stands erect and unaffected against the continued strokes of the ball thrown against it. Art is divine. It can only be rightly expressed if opposed, to bring out the inner beauty.

17. A delicate woman who comes with her son, aged sixteen.

B. Feeling nervous?

Q. Yes.

B. I am also an artist, I have the whole world as my canvas. I paint souls. . . .

Q. She is stricken by failures. She is a very sensitive soul.

B. I know. She has a great heart. It is the "feeling" that matters and not explanations.

Q. She is suffering very much, being unable to express her feeling. She says, "I have never found the way to express myself in art." Creative power did find an outlet through people, but not through art.

B. I know; the way will open; and once it is opened, it will pour forth continually. But it must be opened at the right moment. I will help her. She will feel my help, because I help through pure love. She will have her right ambition. She has a very good heart. I will help her.

18. A sculptor. He had seen in Switzerland that only a few know, and the masses remain ignorant. This problem is a puzzle to him.

B. The Infinite One is in everything and can be expressed in everything.

Q. But is not "happiness" the goal of life?

B. That is the true aim of life, to attain to real happiness; and it does not matter through what medium it is attained; but it depends on one thing, that is, forgetting self. For those who have no self-interest, even hell is heaven.

Q. He is desperate about the masses being misled into chaos, as is being done at present.

B. It will all end soon. I feel it infinitely more than you do.

Q. He feels that some power must guide the world if it is to go aright.

B. I know; the world is being guided.

Q. He says that you the Master of the East bring new consciousness, but in the West, too, there are means such as art, science, etc., through which consciousness can be increased.

B. The confusion is due to this time of spiritual upheaval. The consciousness desired will come soon. Do not be too anxious.

19. A psychologist.

B. Wonderful soul, I know. And for him there is no need to explain in words. He understands, because it is the feeling that matters and not words. He will do a great work in future for humanity. I will help spiritually.

Q. He knows my circumstances?

B. Everything, and I will help him in every way.

20. A German artist who brings some of his paintings to Baba, and presents the following typewritten card:—

"I am very pleased to meet you, and be able to thank you for those two books which we received from you. Your words find a lively echo in me. They are a matured gift which awakens the good to action."

Q. He says he has seen you before face to face, but does not remember where.

B. Tell him I have known him for a very long time.

Q. He has a feeling that he knows you.

B. And I love him, there is no need for explanation.

Q. Is it a link already established?

B. Yes, and I will help him spiritually.

Q. It was his desire to meet you for a very long time.

B. No need to explain. I know.

21. A woman student of psychology.

Q. She says she doesn't want to bother you with questions.

B. That is right, to know me through inner feeling.

Q. She always had a great longing to meet you.

Baba makes her sit beside him, and she gives her hand to him.

Q. She wanted so much to be near you.

B. I know how she feels. I will help her.

22. An architect.

B. Anything to ask?

Q. I cannot ask anything. I am perplexed.

B. Anyway, you can ask. I should like you to sit here and think of what is in your mind.

Q. But it seems absurd to ask anything.

B. Never mind—go on.

Q. I am very anxious to find something real.

B. That something is the only thing worth having. I will help you to find it.

Q. Can I have that?

B. Yes, you can. It is not through words or explanations that it can be got. It is within you. Your heart has to be opened. I will do it.

Q. In New York I saw some of your people who made me feel I had something else to seek after.

B. And when you find it, you will experience higher things even in your worldly affairs. Every morning, the moment you get up, think for a minute: "It is in me," and be assured that I will help you.

23. A woman who has suffered much.

Q. She is at a very awkward moment. She has fights within and fights without, illnesses and difficulties in her profession. She feels that she fails in every way.

B. I know it all, and will help her. Yes, I will help her.

Q. She wants to have faith in you.

B. Yes, she will feel my help. Now that she has met me, it will gradually change her outlook on life.

Q. She does not believe in herself.

B. My help will make her believe in herself, too; and that's the most beautiful thing in life—to have confidence in one's own self.

Q. Can that really be done? (she asks, surprised).

B. Yes, I will help her, and everything will change.

Q. Is she condemned to be alone, as she feels now?

B. No, when the outlook is changed, she won't feel alone any more.

24. A man and wife who have a bookshop in Germany.

Q. Will world conditions take a better turn?

B. Yes.

Q. Will there be an understanding between the East and the West?

B. Yes. It has to be. Soon there will be a spiritual, world-wide revolution in which all will have to unite.

Q. Will it be a new religion or union of all religions into one?

B. Yes, all will be one. It will be a movement of Eternal Love, and a Religion of Love.

Q. Same as Christ's?

B. Yes.

Q. In this generation?

B. This change will happen soon, in this generation.

Q. Will it express itself through war?

B. It might or might not. But it will express itself after an economic war. Your love messages can reach anyone, anywhere, because in all these there is One Infinite God. I will help you spiritually.

25. A man who says he is addicted to drugs.

B. Are you happy?

Q. No, very, very miserable.

B. Never think that "life is dreadful." "I am tired of life." Such thoughts make life miserable. Life is worth living. If you think it is, difficulties will appear insignificant. I will help you to try to develop love. Never think "I am alone, I have too much to do, I am poor," and so on. All are poor. The whole world is poor. Even the millionaires are poor, because they have greed and want more. Love someone, and you will be rich. Do not worry. My blessings.

26. A woman who just looks at Baba.

After a time of silence, Baba says: In reality, from the spiritual viewpoint, there is never a need for explanation. It is to be felt and experienced. One can, by reading books and having theories, get some intellectual understanding of Truth, but that is not real understanding. One must experience Truth, be able to live in Truth and realize Truth.

Q. Is it difficult?

B. Very easy.

Q. How?

B. So easy: but people make it complicated and it seems a gigantic task. I will tell you. Think much of others, and very little of yourself. Very easy. Try, little by little. Just try. When you have a scarf and she (pointing to a friend who came in with her) needs one, give yours to her. Even if she has more, and you nothing, don't feel it. This is simple. Don't take it literally. It is simple. I will help you spiritually.

27. A German Editor. He feels that the Swiss people are not receptive of Eastern lore. The people do not seem to take much interest.

B. Yes, but now they will. The internal message of Love will reach every heart, because it is the same Infinite One in the Swiss, in the German, as in all peoples. It will be unlocked and opened. My love will do that.

Q. Will it affect the materialistic world of the West?

B. Yes: because when the "turning-point" arrives, those who are materialistic will get a great shock.

Q. Switzerland goes through the same crisis as in 1914.

B. Even if the people do not respond readily to the expression of the message of Love, the spirit of it will work.

Q. He fears that it will be necessary for this country to be attacked by others.

B. Not necessarily. But one shock it will have, to make it understand. It is like a dream into a dream ("Maya" into "Maya"). Sometimes to awaken one from an alluring dream, there is need of another terrible dream.

28. A clergyman and a doctor friend.

Q. From the Christian standpoint, Christ is the only one; he is unique. Do you believe that?

B. Unique, indeed, from the standpoint of his state and consciousness. The Mahommedans claim that Mahommed is the only prophet. The Hindus claim Krishna, the Buddhists claim Buddha, the Parsees Zoroaster. Each says that his ideal of the prophet is the unique one. But why bother about that? What do "names" matter? What is important is the life that Jesus lived. To understand Christ, to know him, one has to live his life. Mere ceremonies, talk, discussions, and criticisms do not help one towards knowing Christ. Christ taught one simple thing—Love—and in few of his followers has that Love developed.

Q. Is this standpoint of love consistent with Christian dogma?

B. Love has in it selfless service and renunciation of desires. Pure Love includes everything. If one loves, all other qualities dissolve themselves: and by Love I mean Pure Love—not sexual love as it is meant to-day in the world of matter.

Q. This kind of love is impossible without the help of Masters.

B. God is within and without. Why not seek him within? If one seeks the Grace of God, and God is not able to give it, what kind of God do you call him? People talk, but do not seek his

Grace. God is Infinite, the Soul of Souls. And the individual souls are the drops of that Infinite Ocean. All this depends on outlook. You see this (pointing to a flower) as a flower; I see God in it.

29. A student of law, who is quiet and tries to understand, but looks blank.

B. Law is good. This Universe is based on the Divine Law of Love which pervades all existence. I will spiritually help her to understand more.

Q. How can I strive at the same time to achieve in life what I want materially?

B. What does Perfection mean if it does not include material life? It is practical. One has to adopt that life which keeps materialism and spirituality in balance. How to do that? Lead the worldly life, attend to all your worldly duties, but long for knowing that which is beyond life. This longing will increase gradually, which will make you free and detached from material results. I will help you spiritually and you will know how to do it.

30. A student of Philosophy.

Q. Can one realize virtue without experiencing vice?

B. One has to experience virtue and vice to be able to realize the Infinite who is beyond both.

Q. Is Christ only a question of realization?

B. Yes, Christ is only to be realized.

Q. Is there any great difference between Christ and the Church Religion?

B. A world of difference. Christ is to be lived and not found in ceremonies.

Q. Do you believe that . . . was an initiate?

B. How can I speak against anyone when I find the Infinite in everyone? But why bother about names? You can be an initiate yourself. The same Infinite is within you as within any initiate.

Q. Is this path-finding more difficult in the West than in the East?

B. No, it is a different outlook only; because in the East as in the West there are the same obstacles. Also in both, there are good hearts. And in the teachings of great men, both East and West, there is Love—the same method differently expressed.

31. A housekeeper.

Q. She wants to hold your arm and be with you for a couple of minutes.

Baba lets her sit by his side. She holds his arm in hers, and sits in silence.

B. I will help her.

Q. She needs it very much. She asks, "Why am I naughty?"

B. Why think like that, and why worry about it? It is good to think of our defects to improve them, but don't always worry about defects.

32. A writer of books, partly paralysed.

Q. With my own language I speak with God, because I love truth.

B. Love for truth is everything; hence no need of speaking.

Q. If we love Truth, there is no death, no paralysis.

B. Very true. That's the way one should feel.

Q. I cannot imagine how people can be anti-God?

B. It is due to delusion. Once this disappears, they understand.

33. A woman and her daughter.

Q. How can one develop conscience?

B. Conscience can never be defined as right or wrong, because it is not based on intellect. So when one feels, conscience speaks.

Q. Is it responsive to internal happenings?

B. To-day your conscience might say believe in me, and to-morrow it might say do not believe in me. Conscience means

immediate response to emotion and so always do what you feel. If you feel to-day believe in me, do believe. To-morrow if you don't feel so, don't believe. Conscience is different from discrimination.

Q. Is there something higher than conscience or discrimination?

B. Yes, higher than discrimination is Divine Love, and when one really loves, conscience and discrimination are out of place. Everything is immaterial then; nothing counts.

34. A man who has read yoga books, and is a pupil of one who proclaims himself to be a leading master.

Q. Is he right to call himself such?

B. Everyone has a right to call himself what he likes. It is for others to accept or challenge it. It depends on his living, rather than his teachings.

35. A man who sat silent for about two minutes, and when Baba asked him said he had his desire.

Q. He is seeking for inner freedom, for he can then be useful to humanity.

B. Yes, it is only after finding the Divine Freedom that one can impart happiness to others. I will help him spiritually to have that Freedom.

36. A woman.

Q. Would you help me to understand the process of evolution?

B. Yes. It is the process through which a soul has to pass to attain the human form to realize the Truth. And human beings have also to experience suffering to realize God, which is the goal of humanity and of Eternal Happiness.

37. A woman with her son, an actor.

Q. How can one achieve one's ambition? He (pointing to her son) is an artist.

B. Art is one of the means through which the soul expresses itself, and inspires others. But to do that thoroughly, he must have his inner emotions aroused thoroughly. If you feel that something checks you from expressing yourself, then you have to do one thing, that is, to adjust your mental attitude thus: just before you do anything, think, "I can and will express it thoroughly," and every time you act you will find you are more convinced. It is the mind that is closed. There are many actors, who, either through inferiority or through nervousness or dryness, feel that they cannot express their parts, and this negative feeling of the mind checks expression. While acting, think you are one of the greatest actors of the world and try to express yourself thoroughly. I will help you spiritually. Just think you are the greatest actor. Where's the harm in thinking that? If it is not for "pride," but for bringing the best out of you that you do it, then there is nothing wrong.

Q. What binds her to the Almighty?

B. Divine Love.

Q. But she does not feel she has it.

B. That is because she is unconscious of it. She will feel it now, and I will help her.

38. An artist.

B. I love artists, because through art one can express oneself.

Q. Up till now, through ideas, he tried to find the source of ideas. Is there any other way to find the Divine? He has painted fine paintings for a church, and seeks a deeper insight.

B. Yes, he has a right to understand. Art, when inspired with love, leads to higher realms. Love art, and that art will open for you the inner life. When you paint, you forget everything except your object. When you are too much engrossed in it, you are lost in it; and when you are lost in it, your ego diminishes, Love infinite appears; and when Love is created, God is attained. So you see how art can lead one to find Infinite God.

Q. He realizes that his "ego" must in a selfless way express the Divine Infinite.

B. Then that ego is not finite and limited. It becomes the Selfless Unlimited Ego.

Q. But this he will always try to develop more and more through art and then leave it to you.

B. Yes, I will help him spiritually.

Q. He is sorry to have spoken so much.

B. No, don't worry. I am so glad. He has a very good heart. He will have my help.

39. A doctor and her sister.

Q. How can one be a good doctor and use medical science best?

B. It is simple. Through Love. If you love your work, you can do it with love, and anything that is done with love has perfect results. To be a good doctor, always have in mind that to you all patients good or bad, big or small, are equal. Treat with as much care and interest a beggar as you would a millionaire. It is simple and practical, and yet a good many doctors do not observe this simple rule. Only if a doctor realizes that One Infinite God is within all, then that doctor works like a saint. I am a doctor of souls. To me, good or bad, all are lovable; and I help each according to his need. But although it is simple for you to be a doctor, it is very difficult to practise it. So many things interfere, reputation, name, money, society, circumstances, and so on. Is it clear? You can be a good doctor if you keep this in mind. You are such a fine soul. I will help you.

40. Introduced as an artist, and his two sons.

B. I am also a painter. I paint with the colours of spirituality.

Q. That is what he wants, spiritual insight.

B. It will come. Anything more to ask?

Q. I want a better opening for the expression of art, something spiritual.

B. It will come. For the present, do whatever you think appropriate for expressing your art, and when you feel something better

to express, then automatically and by itself it will open out to you.

Q. That is what he thinks also.

B. There is a painter in India. When we were both young he came to me and showed me his paintings. They were fantastic. Though I saw and knew they were not good, yet I said, "It is good, go on." After a year or so, he came back to me and showed me some more. They were marvellous. Yet I did not say they were marvellous. I said, "Go on," and to-day he is one of the greatest artists of the East. So whatever you feel like doing, go on doing. It will go on developing by itself. How do you like my painting? (The artist looked round when Baba pointed to the beautiful scenery outside.) All this is my painting.

Q. I wish I could paint a thousandth part of it.

B. You will when you get the proper intuition. I will help you.

41. An historian of art.

Q. What's the solution of this world-wide misery? Will it be solved through martyrdom?

B. Yes, through martyrdom by many. But that is a question of collective effort. What about you personally?

Q. I am not concerned about myself personally.

B. But the personal question does come in, even with a desire to serve others selflessly, as you do, because your individual efforts for the good of others have a collective effect. For example, a leper amongst a crowd of healthy people would spoil the whole atmosphere with the infection of disease. So also another, scented profusely, and emitting delicious odours from his person, would spread fragrance around him. That is, personal means collective, and collective means personal. So in order to be able to help others, you yourself must first have knowledge and power.

Q. Putting one's personal question aside, trying one's utmost to help one's fellows, if they do not understand, what has one to do?

B. It means that the feeling of happiness is not so deep in them as in you. It is the lifelong aim of every soul to impart happiness to others, even if it be at the sacrifice of one's own.

Q. Perhaps one who is not always encouraged by circumstances, feels dejected at times.

B. But that will change. You have a good heart. I like you very much. Every human being has some weakness. But it is the heart that matters.

Q. How is selfishness caused?

B. At the root of all selfishness is self-interest, want, desire. If two dogs see a bone, they fight because they both want it. Both desire to possess it. Even if they do not see and do not fight, all the same, the desire is there.

Q. Is there fear?

B. Why do people fear? Because they are afraid of losing the things they want to possess.

Q. What are the means to be fearless?

B. The only possible means is the spiritual change of heart. That only will make people satisfied. For instance, why do people drink? Peasants who labour hard all day, when they come home after the day's work, drink for stimulation. But if they were to get something else instead, they would be satisfied with that, until their desire for stimulation disappeared. So, for the satisfaction of cravings created through desire and want, spiritual unfoldment is needed.

Q. But how could spiritual unfoldment come when selfishness and desire are there deep-rooted?

B. That will be done by Love. Love has such powers as to unite all hearts.

Q. What are the hours and time that you advise for concentration for spiritual work?

B. There is no fixed time. I do it, when I feel like doing it. It is Infinite. There is no rule for the Infinite.

42. A well-known dancer.

B. Dancing is a good art if expressed rightly. It has divine qualities, and if properly done, it has wonderful effects. If done wrongly, it has the opposite effect. . . . I am happy to see you.

Q. I feel so happy too.

B. Anything more?

Q. Since a certain time, he has not clearly understood his own individual way to do things, i.e., the right way to express himself through art.

B. Soon you will know. I will help you spiritually. You will feel it. This contact will help you henceforth.

43. The son of one of Baba's disciples.

Q. How could I have happiness?

B. Everyone in the world, consciously or unconsciously, seeks happiness in one form or another. You seek it in your own way. Even a murderer seeks happiness, which he hopes to find in the very act of murder, that is why he commits it. Why or when does a man commit murder? Either through hatred or jealousy. And because he thinks he will find happiness if he commits murder, he takes his revenge for hatred or jealousy. Again, why does a man commit suicide? Because he expects to find happiness in it. Why does a man drink? Because of the happiness he expects to derive from the drink. But what happiness does he derive from the drink, and how long does it last? Only as long as the effect of the intoxication lasts. When it cools down, he feels broken, dejected, and miserable. It is the same with lust. One does it for the happiness one derives, even for the moment. But it is only for the time being that one derives happiness from one action or another; and when it is over, one is miserable again. Real happiness is different. It never changes or ceases. It is permanent, everlasting . . . and it lies there; there, within you. It is sleeping (latent) and must be opened (unlocked). Once it is opened, it is always happiness.

I am the source of happiness, the Sun of all Bliss. But there is a curtain that veils you from the sun and you do not see it. Now, because of your inability to see owing to the curtain you cannot say there is no sun. The sun is there, shining and spreading its lustre all over the world; but you do not allow its rays to approach you, obstructing them with the veil of ignorance. Remove that

and you will see the sun. I will help you to tear open the curtain and enable you to find happiness with it. I love you; I love you all.

Q. Will I pass my examination?

B. I am afraid, no.

Q. Then I won't go.

B. No, you must go. What's wrong even if you fail? Suppose you pass, what happens? You find happiness for the time being. Then again the question, what would you do next? You are made unhappy at the new problem, and so on. So why worry? However, I will see that you pass. You must go in for the examination. I will turn the key.

It will be noticed from these records that Baba's constant endeavour in each interview is to arouse confidence in the heart of the questioner. He will not permit depression to continue, he drives away fears, he says there is nothing to worry about. His promise is "I will help you," the significance of which is that the inquirer is made to feel that his difficulties can be overcome and that what he aims at can be reached. Baba uses few words; he is often content that nothing is said either by him or by the inquirer, and it is noticeable that the inquirer is satisfied too. Many of the questions are asked by those who want to "understand," usually something about themselves. Baba's answer invariably is not to think more, but to act, to do the simplest thing, for understanding comes from action. The confidence Baba seeks to arouse is in the heart, it is not intellectual conviction—about that he is indifferent. He wants people to feel. He may give a merely intellectual answer, but his intention is that the inquirer should feel and ever feel more deeply, so that the heart is stirred. Sometimes it will be seen that he does not answer a question, but will reply to the heart. I find these questions and answers of great interest. Here is a description of an interview in Rome which I cannot refrain from giving:

The visitor entered Baba's room with the manners of a man of the world; his mental attitude was that of an erudite person. The conversation was of a scholarly character and lasted a few minutes; Baba with patience answered the questions and tried to revive in the man's mind the idea of the real goal of life and the essentials to achieve fulfilment—when it seemed as if the man finding himself again in the bewildering confusion of intellectual terminology, requested in a desperate manner that Baba should let him experience spiritual consciousness, and asked Baba to keep silent and not to repeat the wisdom he knew so well. Baba smilingly put aside the board, and took the man's hand with loving desire to meet his need. The effect of those few moments was extraordinary—the man and all present felt Baba's radiance. The inner upheaval changed the rhythm of the visitor's breath, which became deep, slow, and quiet. The profound commotion within showed in his face, his heart and mind were in harmony.

Often people ask Baba about their health or about the health of others, and he will recommend what they should do. Sometimes he will say that he will cure the person concerned. He will occasionally give people small tasks of meditation or some other religious practice. Rarely, he will make drastic suggestions, such as that people should completely change their work.

One rather interesting "case" may be mentioned. I know the boy concerned and was told of the events at the time they occurred. This adolescent boy was a great trouble to those responsible for him; bright and intelligent with artistic abilities, he was irresponsible and wilful. He had been told of Baba but had not met him, and said that he felt Baba's influence and saw him in dreams. This did not, however, prevent him from being troublesome. He had made a practice of travelling on the Underground Railway without a ticket and was caught on several occasions and warned; but he

took the warnings lightly and became all the more insolent. At last the London Passenger Transport Board decided to prosecute, and he was charged at a Police Court. The case against him was complete. He had to plead guilty and his relations and the counsel and solicitor engaged for his defence thought he would certainly be severely punished. The boy, however, was undisturbed, saying, "It's quite all right. Baba says I am not to worry; it will be quite all right." To everybody's surprise, and in spite of the Transport Board's insistence, the Magistrate let the boy off with a fine. Shortly afterwards the boy was caught again, having forged signatures on a season ticket application form. This time a friend went direct to the Board's offices, and, speaking to a clerk in the entrance hall, was advised to approach a certain official and tell him the facts unofficially to get his personal interest. This was done, and the result was that the further lapse was overlooked. This was the end of the boy's failings in this direction.

Shortly afterwards Baba came to London, and the boy met him for the first time. The boy told him all his troubles. "Think of me," said Baba. "But suppose I forget?" "Never mind, try to think of me." The boy made no answer. Then Baba put his hand on the boy's head and said, "*Promise* to try to think of me." Against this the boy made no resistance and was overcome.

There is no formality about any of these interviews. The conditions under which they are given make them as informal and simple as possible. Baba always remembers those who come to see him and what they have said. "If I did not remember, how could I help?" he says when people have expressed surprise that he should remember some detail about them.

People are often moved to tears in Baba's presence. I

remember the first time I met him that several of those present found tears streaming from their eyes as they looked at him. At the Prem-Ashram, it will be remembered, the boys were frequently and for long periods in tears. These tears are not ordinary crying. They are not tears of sorrow, but tears of joy—they are, indeed, a spiritual gift for the purification of the soul, and happy are they who experience them. We remember that the saints spent much time weeping. Such tears are emotional experiences, for they warm the heart, and the warm and tender heart is the vehicle of spiritual experience and the condition of the creative act.

Another feature of Baba's working is his abuse of disciples' sometimes in their presence, at other times in their absence˙ I have referred to the abuse of Masters by each other: they will even throw stones at each other. This is done so that the Master who abuses may attract to himself what are called the "sanskaras" of the race, for the Master has no sanskaras of his own. When we abuse another we create "sanskaras" for ourselves, that is to say, psychic impressions—the abuse falls upon our own heads. When Upasni Maharaj abused Baba, he was attracting to himself—for the purpose of dissolving them—Baba's own sanskaras, until Baba had himself reached perfection; thereafter, in such abuse, he was blessing mankind. When, therefore, Baba rebukes a disciple it is for the sake of protecting him, if he is in danger, or of attracting to himself the sanskaras, or impressions, that are affecting the disciple and so freeing him from them. To be abused by a Master is a blessing.

Reference has been made to the Sanscrit word "sanskaras" in earlier pages and in the extracts from Baba's discourses that have been given. This word means that every action creates on the mind of its performer an impression (sanskara);

thoughts and desires also create impressions. Good actions or thoughts result in good sanskaras, and bad actions or thoughts in evil sanskaras. Sanskaras do not die with the death of the body, so that everyone, according to this teaching, is necessarily born with many sanskaras to which new ones are added in the course of his present life. Not only evil but also good sanskaras are a hindrance to spiritual progress. Unless they are wiped out, no one can make such progress. One of the easiest ways of wiping them out is, we are told, to keep company with a Sadguru, or Perfect Master, for one of the greatest of the self-imposed duties of every Sadguru is to destroy the sanskaras of his disciples and followers.

A Perfect Master is without sanskaras, for their absence is a sign of his realization of infinity. But all others are held in the illusion of the world by their sanskaras, for sanskaras tie the soul to the world, and the disharmony of their lives is due to their identification of themselves with the world. The Perfect Master destroys sanskaras, which are also illusions, by various means. Just as there are different degrees of evil and good actions, so there are different kinds of sanskaras. There are, according to this doctrine, seven kinds of sanskaras, every kind having a different colour. Sanskaras of a red colour are the worst, and are generally contracted by doing violence to others. Non-red sanskaras are wiped out by Perfect Masters through the radiation of spirituality; but red sanskaras they wipe out by beating or abusing the person. There is, the argument goes, no other way to wipe them out. We can believe that desperate diseases require desperate remedies.

In recent years Baba has travelled a great deal with the object of getting into contact with large numbers of people in all parts of the world. He is, he says, "laying cables in the unseen." For the same reason, he visits on his travels cinemas

and other places of entertainment and spends much time among crowds. The idea is that when he is among a crowd of people, composed of those whose minds are directed to one end or absorbed by one thought, as, for instance, at a cinema or a theatre, he can influence them readily. He can work simultaneously on behalf of all those present. It is economy of effort. Those who have been with him on such occasions say that sometimes he will buy seats for a performance, sit there for a quarter of an hour, and then tell them all to go. If one watches him instead of looking at the screen or stage, it may be observed that his attention is not on the screen or stage but elsewhere, he is working in some way that is not apparent.

Is this a form of collective hypnotism? I see no reason to suppose that it is; for hypnotic influence of this sort would be supposed to be directed either towards the person exercising the power or towards some material interest. Baba remains unobserved in such surroundings and obviously gains no advantage from what he may be doing. His own explanation, as given to me, is that in the effort made by him the spiritual advancement of individuals is aimed at. There are people, in particular yogis in the East and spiritual or psychological teachers in the West, who use hypnotic powers upon people who come into contact with them to get what they desire, money, or influence, or power of some kind. Even if such powers are employed for the good of the person hypnotized, the influence is temporary and does not lead to spiritual enlightenment, for what is done in hypnosis, either good or ill, has no permanent effect. Baba's spiritual working, supposing that to be what he is engaged upon when among crowds, must, if it be real, affect the whole man.

I have not observed in Baba anyexercise of hypnotic powers upon individuals, nor have I observed at any time the results

of hypnosis. That personal contact with him has considerable influence upon individuals is undoubted. I have known people who have said that he left them indifferent; but that is rare. The majority of people feel something in his personality as soon as they see him, which they do not find easy to describe, and often people are moved emotionally, frequently to tears. The description usually given to the feeling he arouses is that of a sense of love. That is not hypnosis.

On his travels he comes into contact with those whom he calls his "spiritual agents," people who may have never heard of him but who, nevertheless, know him in the spirit and do, as he says, his work. Some of them are unconscious of what they are engaged upon. Merely to see such people, and for them to look at him, for their eyes to meet, not even to speak to them or to have any other obvious communication, he will take long journeys. He will also send his disciples to distant places to do the same, as when he sent an English devotee to Warsaw to find an unnamed beggar who usually stood outside the Cathedral. I relate this as I am told it. There are several references to such meetings in the preceding pages; there was one in Rome, another near Mount Generosa in Italy, another in New York, and another in Ceylon. Some years ago there came to Baba in India (as I have described) a man who seemed to have no consciousness of the world. He was drawn to Baba by some inward urge, we must suppose; but why he came and why he is looked after by Baba only Baba knows. He probably is working on an inner plane.

I do not propose to put forward any occult explanation of the incidents of the kind I have mentioned, though the possibility of such explanations will be known to some readers.

Baba is restless at most times, even during sleep. He is quiet only at specific moments of silence and when he is

receiving visitors. When awake he is rarely still and seldom allows those about him to remain still; activity and disturbance constitute the atmosphere around him. In sleep he moves his hands almost without ceasing and seems to be continually working internally. His Indian disciples are often startled at his behaviour in sleep when they are with him at night. I have told already how once at Nasik, Baba deputed three disciples to relieve each other in pressing his feet during the night, each to spend two hours doing so and not to sleep. One who was so engaged said that he heard noises and went out to see what was causing them, but found nothing; when he felt sleepy Baba would shake his foot.

The account of his life that I have given in the first part of this book has one characteristic that no one will fail to note, the manner in which he changes his plans, abandons projects, alters arrangements, and creates difficulties for all who are associated with him. From a practical Western point of view he cannot be depended upon in ordinary affairs. For instance, the school upon which he had apparently set his heart was given up without warning. When he is travelling, no one knows what he will do from day to day, or what his requirements will be, or how long he will stay at any place he may visit. He will make long and arduous journeys in India, and when he arrives at his destination, where his disciples anticipate rest, he will suddenly decide to return or to go elsewhere. No explanations are ever given of these changes; they have to be accepted without hesitation. It is impossible not to suppose that this is a definite part of his method of working. To allow nothing to be settled, to create movement, even apparent chaos, are the conditions in which what he expects from people must be done.

Yet it need not be supposed that Baba's plans or projects

have no value in themselves though they are given up, or though like the journey in Persia they seem unnecessary efforts. They have value while they exist and while he uses them. They are scaffoldings, as he has said, or they are moulds into which energy is poured. They are, therefore, not meaningless; but while they exist all meaning is in them, and they must be accepted and followed and carried out as though they were to be completed or to remain for ever. And they must be given up with the utmost readiness.

Although Baba pays attention to the details of his affairs and makes his own arrangements, and although he is a strict disciplinarian, as I have said, and expects his orders to be strictly carried out, he also lets people do and say what they please, and if any great desire is expressed, either concerning himself or the one who speaks, he usually allows the person to act as he wishes. He will therefore permit people to make statements about him which they may strongly desire to make, without checking them, and with an indifference to the results that is remarkable. I have already drawn attention to this. Of the statements made on his behalf in London and America, examples of which I have given, it must be remembered that as he neither speaks nor writes, the documents were written by others, and that they contain phrases and expressions of general ideas or interpretations or glosses by those who have written or edited the statements before publication. Although Baba usually requires to know what those statements are, and will correct them when he thinks fit, he will also allow people to have their own way if they are determined upon it.

Thus, statements made on behalf of Baba need to be received with caution so far as their literal accuracy is concerned.

Baba's attitude to the Press should be noted. He does not court publicity, and frequently takes great precautions both

in India and when travelling elsewhere to ensure that he is not recognized. When publicity is thrust upon him, however, either by the assiduous efforts of his friends or by the importunity of the Press itself, he usually does not resist it. In England and in America he has given numerous interviews to journalists, and, though he has shown what appears to be an almost childish amusement at the noise and heat of the Press hunt after him, he has also shown complete indifference to the accuracy or otherwise of what has been said. He has, so far as I am aware, never defended himself against any misrepresentation of himself or his activities, or protested against any attack. As I have related, when a London weekly paper, which devotes itself to the exposure of scandals and frauds, and has one of the largest circulations of any paper in the country, printed a violent attack upon him, he said, "It also is doing my work."

It seems that he is content that people should be brought into contact with him even by enemies, and desires that they should know of him no matter by what means. To attack him is as good as to praise him. Indeed, I think he prefers attacks to praise because they arouse more feeling. To arouse people, to awaken them, is what he aims to do.

Baba is not a politician, and takes care never to make any comment upon political affairs. That is not because he has no interest in politics or considers them unimportant; but firstly because of the unsettled political state of India, he having been born and being domiciled in that country, and secondly, because he addresses himself not to institutions or nations but to individuals. The awakened individual who realizes the meaning of the world, is the creator of new political conditions and is alone able to bring them into existence. A new spiritual impulse must precede a new political order.

MIRACLES

The question of miracles is constantly asked in connection with Baba. As soon as his name is mentioned as a holy man from the East, it is expected that he will perform miracles to convince the world of supernatural powers. In the East, miracle is not the unusual and inexplicable phenomenon that it is in the West, for the East is trained to credulity as the West is trained to doubt. Miracle is certainly a matter of time and place; but it is surely more than the product of superstition. It is a phenomenon of religious experience to be found everywhere. The lives of saints, not only in the East but in the West too, abound with incidents of a miraculous kind. Even to-day in the East, practices that appear miraculous, such as walking on live coals with naked feet without receiving hurt (which was demonstrated in England by an Indian before a number of spectators in 1934), are familiar, if not exactly common events. Shri Purohit Swami, in the account of his life *An Indian Monk* (Macmillan, 1932), tells the story of a holy man who would not let a train go without him.

One day a Sadhu, or holy man, went to the railway station and requested the ticket collector to admit him to the train, saying he was a Sadhu and had no money for a ticket. The Anglo-Indian[1] not only did not listen to his request, but pushed him aside rudely. He took the insult very calmly and muttered to himself: "I will see now whether this train will start." The driver whistled, and tried to start the train, but to no purpose. The engine refused to obey. Others came to help, all failed. The train service was very frequent, and as the first train could not start, many others were held up. Wires were sent to the head office. Experts arrived; they tried their best, all to no avail. For one full hour the service was at a standstill. Ultimately the Indian stationmaster, who knew that

"Anglo-Indian" is now the legal substitute for the old term "Eurasian."

the Sadhu had intervened, approached the officials and said to them: "Unless that Sadhu who is standing outside the gate is given a seat in the train, it is not likely to start." He was ridiculed, but after a short time common sense prevailed, and the Sadhu was accommodated comfortably in a first-class compartment, and the train steamed off. It was a practical demonstration, and the officials, however wise, had to climb down. Thenceforth the Sadhu was allowed to travel first class.

The Swami also relates how Shri Ramdas Swami when called by some simple people to see a Sadhu walking across the River Krishna, said, "This is a wonderful feat indeed, and when one comes to think of it worth exactly one halfpenny, for which sum the ferryman would have taken the Sadhu across."

The last incident is an example of the contempt for miracles that is felt not only by scientifically trained men, but also by the spiritually developed.

That a master in the spiritual life, who lives on the plane of creativeness, has control over the mechanism of matter, and therefore if he thinks fit can perform what are called miracles is to be accepted as true, though science takes no account of it. But that a miracle is proof of the most highly developed spirituality is to be doubted. On the contrary, the performance of miracle, while it may be evidence of powers beyond those of ordinary men, may often be regarded as a sign of defective spirituality. It depends on why the miracle is done. If done for the sake of the performer, or to establish his claims, or to create astonishment, or as exhibitionism, or for any like reason, the miracle is unquestionably a demonstration of inferior spirituality. Those who are masters do not need miracles.

The miracles of the New Testament are acts of love and mercy. They are mostly connected with healing, and all are symbols of truth, performed for their symbolic value rather

than for the sake of those whom they benefited. It is a law of the spiritual life that if miracle is possible it must not be done except for spiritual reasons and even then in secret and seldom. The Sufi master, al-Hujwírí, said: "The novice desires to gain miracles, but the adept desires to gain the Giver of miracles." Life itself is the supreme miracle, and to be born again in the spirit is the miracle of miracles.

The question, Can Baba perform miracles? is therefore the same question as, Is Baba a spiritual master? to which miracles would provide no answer; and to ask, as is continually done, Does Baba perform miracles? is to forget that his plane of activity is that of spirit, not that of matter. The stories of remarkable events in Baba's life, some of which I have related, though I have ignored many more, are no more than stories. They have no "evidential" value: their significance is of another kind altogether. They belong, as do all miracles, to the realm of fairy-tale, of phantasy, of the childlike and innocent. Do not let us be so foolish as to deny the existence of that realm, for to do that is to deny the significance of our own childhood. That realm exists, and it is true. This is hard for the rational man to believe, but the lover of divinity, of the infinite possibilities of man, does not find it hard. Do not I who write this look for miracle? Yes, let me admit it, a miracle within my own heart, my own personal miracle, which I must perform myself.

There are stories told of Baba where the "miracle" is psychological, of which a characteristic example is that of an incident which occurred in New York in 1931:

A large reception was being given for Baba at a private house. He was seated on a balcony above a large room and the visitors were led before him one by one. Among them was a Russian lady whom Baba asked to be brought near to him. The woman felt rather uneasy and did nothing but smile and blush. Baba said on

his board, "I will help you spiritually." The woman, however, was not greatly impressed by what she heard, but it had the following result. She had never been able to feel love for her daughter, who was twenty. They lived in constant conflict, and hated the sight of each other, for there were constant disputes, and hard words. One morning after meeting Baba she woke up in great excitement, a feeling of well-being and ecstasy pervaded her, she did not know herself. She had an intense desire to see her daughter, went to her and begged her forgiveness. The daughter was deeply affected, and since then the mother and daughter have been happy and united.

A matter closely related to miracle and partaking somewhat of its nature is that of the healing of physical ailments. There are many cases of healing done by Baba, but here again it must be remembered that the healing is not done for the sake of miracle. These cases prove no more than that Baba has healing powers, which he exercises from time to time. Baba does not hold himself out as a healer. His concern is not with the body but with the soul. He turns the attention from material things to inner realities, how then could he devote himself to the cure of bodies? That is the task of the physician.

In an interview given in 1932, Baba said in answer to a question about miracles:

> The only real miracle for a perfect one is to make others perfect too, to make them realize the infinite state, which he himself enjoys. That is a real miracle . . . otherwise miracles have nothing to do with truth at all.

IS BABA A MESSIAH?

There are two main types of leaders of mankind: those whose authority comes from God and those whose authority comes from men. The latter express the human desire to press

onwards, they represent the natural urge to get out of confusion. Their task belongs to this world, to the earthly kingdom, to politics, and the social order. Their aim is to make life tolerable, to enable men to bear earthly existence, and to reap the fruits of their achievements. Nearly all the known leaders belong to this type. They are self-appointed and grasp power. They can deliver men from one earthly condition into another. Many great men belong to this type and also all charlatans.

The other type of leader is rare. He does not seek election. He owes nothing to man. He has subjected himself to the truth of his own being, and the word that speaks in his heart is not his own but God's. He does not represent men; he is not of his time; he belongs to the future. Such men are saviours, but they do not save from this life except for the sake of heavenly being.

Messianism means salvation. It is not peculiar to any age or religion. The popular Messiah is one who saves from earthly sufferings. When people ask about Messiahs they always mean someone who will do something for them on the material plane which they cannot do for themselves. Baba has been hailed as such a Messiah, but he does not fit the rôle, and those who expect such leadership from him are necessarily disappointed.

Though Baba is concerned with men and women, I repeat that he is not concerned at all with this world. Thus there is an apparent contradiction. Men and women have to live in this world and perform the tasks of earthly life. The spiritual master is master not of any merely earthly technique; his mastery is in that glorious realm of spirit to which men in the earth also belong though they do not know it, or knowing it forget it. Can the contradiction between this necessary existence under earthly conditions, and the no less necessary life in the heavenly

kingdom, be reconciled? That is man's practical problem. The reconciliation is simply to be found in this—to be awakened to the existence of the supra-mundane world. The spiritual world includes the earthly. It is not outside it but contains it, so that once the eye is open to the sharp realities and infinite depths of spiritual existence, earthly life gets its meaning. That meaning is not to be found in terms of earth but in terms of heaven. It is by looking away from the earth that the significance of the earth can be found, and earthly life is seen in its full meaning.

There is no solution to the problem of individual men and of the social order in any new conception of the State or in any change of economic or political structure. The solution is only in a changed individual recognizing himself as belonging to the spiritual order, who associates with others for mutual joy.

To ask if Baba is a Messiah is to find oneself tangled in snares, whatever the answer to the question, until one realizes that all Messiahs of this world lead those who trust in them to new captivities. The Saviour we need must set us free, which means that he must awaken us, which is all we require. That is what Baba claims to do.

There was a woman who came to him in London, a rich woman, imperious in manner, who said as soon as she entered the room, "Are you Christ?" Baba looked at her softly and answered, "Yes." She got up in a rage and walked out. He said nothing. Presently she asked to see him again, and he refused. She waited about until he came out of the room and then came up to him meekly and said, "Forgive a silly old woman."

To speak of Baba as an incarnation of Christ, meaning that he is the re-birth of the being known as Jesus Christ, is to misunderstand Christ and the New Testament no less than

to misunderstand Baba. Christ does not need to be born again except in the heart. Everyone who loves and forgives, and lives according to the heavenly kingdom, is a new birth of Christ. Said Père de Causade, the eighteenth-century Jesuit, "The life of every saint is the life of Jesus Christ, it is a new gospel." What the being known as Jesus Christ did at a moment in history was done once for all and does not require to be repeated. The profound doctrine of "Christ in you," which is the realization of Christ Consciousness, is not to be confused with belief in the physical reappearance of an historic personality; and the doctrine of reincarnation does not imply that he who once walked in Galilee is to be looked for to-day, or any day, in India or on London streets.

Baba's reply to the woman is the reply he gives to all who ask such questions out of folly or innocence. We should be neither foolish nor innocent. The answers of Baba are meant to arouse us, they are not idle words but disturbing.

FOLLOWERS WHO LEAVE HIM

It is the experience of masters and leaders to be deserted by those who once followed them. Those successful leaders who so well organize themselves that their followers do not leave them are not the greatest leaders, for they succeed through their concern for the mundane and practical, and the rewards they offer are tangible. Spiritual leaders are disappointing in practical achievement because they have no ends in the material world, and the rewards they offer are nothing, being all. The test of the leader is that all forsake him.

So we must expect to find that many of those who come to Baba as his disciples fall away. Baba has said, "There will be very few that remain." They are the most enthusiastic, who sound his praises loudest and find no one like him, whose

enthusiasm dies, who see the glamour depart, who believing so greatly can believe no longer. It is a sad experience for the disciple, and not without pain for the master, though the pain is touched with joy, for those who go away also do his work.

The master of spiritual things must so test the souls of his followers that they can resist every temptation to leave him. The master needs disciples, but he also needs to lose them if he can. He must shake them off if they can be made to go, for he must also demonstrate the vanity of the world to the world. All masters are elusive, distracting, and contradictory; they get up to all sorts of tricks to drive away those whom they love. There is nothing that a master will not do to put a disciple to the severest test, to disturb his relations with him to the uttermost, so that if possible he may be detached. The master is least gentle with those he loves best.

The relation of disciple to master has to be so close that nothing can shake it; and until master and disciple are one their relations remain subject to destruction. Only the perfection of love that the master has for his disciple will enable the disciple to stay. For what is it that the master expects of his disciple as he draws him ever nearer to himself but such abandon as allows nothing to be held back, no interests, no opinions, nothing of the limited self?

This is not to submerge the disciple in the master; it is not the surrender of individuality. It is the end of separateness and the joyful overturning of individuality. The soul of the disciple is given up that he may receive it again. To give it up is the test—not even to be ready to do so; but to do it. And having given it up he becomes as his master. For the end of discipleship is to be a disciple no more, but a master. Those who desert a master lose their discipleship in the wrong way. They cut themselves off when they should jump more deeply in. They refuse equality.

The most constant complaint made against Baba, as I have already mentioned, is that he is continually changing his plans. He acts, it seems, by whim, and puts those about him into confusion. It is said that he makes promises and does not keep them; that he gives instructions and contradicts them; and that what he proposes is not carried out. The facts are not disputed; many of them are recorded earlier in this book. Why does he act thus? We can offer a variety of explanations, the most simple of which is that he acts according to vision or intuition. In terms of ordinary life it is impossible to explain anything that he does, for what is material is a means, not an end. His is not an ordinary life of routine and order. He observes no rule. From the standpoint of the spiritual order, which is an altogether different "order" from that of material existence, nothing else is possible. The spirit moveth where it listeth, we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. To attempt to judge the spiritual life by the laws of the senses and according to the requirements of civilization is to fall into confusion, for it cannot be done. The spirit does not act according to plan, for the characteristic of the spiritual life is impulse and spontaneity.

Also, in these changes of plans Baba is testing his disciples, making severe demands upon their faithfulness. These actions, so difficult to understand, are an element in his technique of training. To create uncertainty, to jog people out of routine and habit, and to prepare them for anything, are certainly important in relation to the task of remaking the world in the terms of a new understanding of life.

HIS MISSION

This brings us to the consideration of Baba's mission. He is not a teacher; he is not the founder of a religion: to him all

religions are one. He does not establish any organization or any society. Certainly there are people forming a group around him, and there are others attached to him in many countries of the world; but they are not organized, nor is there any intention that they should be organized. Among the disciples the Circle, to which reference has been made earlier in some of Baba's discourses, is the central element. To establish the Circle may be said to be the Master's main task. The Circle consists of twelve, who have given up all, and are brought by Baba into the realization of perfection: he speaks of ". . . a Circle for God-realization." Their training is necessarily a secret matter. Its importance was suggested by a remark made by Baba in 1923, of which I have a note; he said:

> For the Circle I shall have to get ill no less than twenty-eight times, and in each of my illnesses I shall have to shed tears.

Baba once propounded what he called "A Spiritual Riddle." He said:

> The human body is composed of five elements of Nature, viz., air, fire, earth, water, and ether. Now each of us possesses mind, but so long as the mind controls the body the Perfection state (i.e. the state of the God-realized person) cannot be attained. If the mind crosses the first plane and goes into the second, the first is realized; when it goes to the third, the second is realized and so on. When it reaches the seventh plane, it becomes Perfect.
>
> Now, every Sadguru is divided into twelve parts, which are his Circle. The Circle consists invariably of twelve persons only. So the human body, which is composed of five elements of Nature passes through the seven planes ($5 + 7$) and becomes a Sadguru $= 12$.

As the head of the Circle is the Chargeman, to whom are entrusted the innermost truths, the one to whom the Master gives authority to use his powers. "I am the Chargeman of

two masters," said Baba. Shri Upasni Maharaj said of Baba, "I have given my charge to Meher Baba. He is the holder of my key."

In an interview given in Bombay in February 1932, Baba in answer to a question said:

> My work is to lead others to reach the goal: to live in the world and not to be of it, and to be in harmony with everything and everyone.

Baba has come, he says, to awaken. What does he seek to awaken? The sleeping soul of man. How does he do that? By attracting men and women through love. When people are brought into contact with him he uses their circumstances, their troubles, or even their material advantages, to arouse them to the realization of their true selves, to liberate them from illusions. He gives them tasks, he suggests that they should do this or that, and for great results he proposes small things; but the great reward is no single thing, it is the realization of the Infinite Self. He tells the story of a devotee who wished to succeed as a speaker and came to his master for advice, who gave him a ring, saying that while he wore that ring he would always be able to move great audiences. One day after a speech he found that he was not wearing the ring, having forgotten to put it on his finger. Then he realized that the power to do what he wanted was in himself, not in the ring, and he threw the ring away. He had no longer any use for it.

Religious practices are useful to those who find them useful. Baba does not discourage them; in fact he insists that those who profess a particular religion should carry out the duties it imposes upon its adherents.[1] He himself, though formally

[1] Baba has made it clear that there is no middle course between following a Perfect Master and observing one's own religion.

acknowledging all religious rites, practises none. They can be means to an end, but they are not the end, and to one who has found such means dispensable he lays down no law. To rise above all means to the end itself is the goal. In the Heavenly City there is no temple—"I saw no temple therein," reported the author of the Apocalypse.

All things are connected with the infinite, and men have the opportunity of living in that knowledge. That is why Baba values the warm heart in whoever it is found, and why all actions and all duties of daily life can lead to perfection. The warm heart is the heart of love, the creative heart, the infinite in man. Whatever is done by such a heart is acceptable. "I am not concerned with people's sins," he said to me on one occasion. I remembered William Blake's saying, "Satan thinks that Sin is displeasing to God: he ought to know that Nothing is displeasing to God but Unbelief and Eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." God's concern with sin is to forgive it, for it leads men to know themselves, that is to know God. Baba is not concerned with sin, because he is not concerned to judge people, or even to cure them of their sins. He desires to lift them, or to show how they can lift themselves, out of the sinful state, so that sin no longer remains pleasant. To feel that we must blame ourselves, that we are guilty, is the sinful state.

Baba, let me repeat, places emphasis upon love. Not talking, nor teaching, nor writing, but love. He acts by love. The impression he makes upon people is that of one who loves, and that nothing but love matters. To love with intensity, to love so that the loved is hurt, to love as a consuming fire, is to love as God loves. This is the deep desire of all who have experienced love, even human love, which seems so often little more than a deception. Human love, the love of men

for each other and of men and women for one another, is the symbol of divine love, the close pattern, the image of love, the most cherished human experience. Love is happiness found in others, doing what one likes in association with others, shared abundance. The division between divine love and human love is that between love for others and love for ourself, between love that is overflowing and has no conditions and love that is stingy and demanding.

There are four aspects of love: natural love, carnal love, human love, and divine love. All love is earthly except divine love; and divine love includes all other loves. There is no deception in natural love nor in carnal love, for they are instinctive; deception is in human love, which is conscious and the next step to divine love.

The expression of divine love in the language of a man for his bride or a woman for her lover is common in the East. There the relation between erotic love and heavenly love is not so obscured as it is in the West, though we have the "Song of Songs" in our Scriptures to confound us. We shrink from the sensuous images of love that the East finds it possible to use, and hesitate to see in earthly passion likeness to the divine passion for man. Yet ardent love for God as the Best Beloved is what should possess our hearts, and must possess them if the love that is God's working for us and giving to us is to be our love too, so intently felt, so absorbing that, as Spinoza said, we do not ask him to love us in return.

The songs of Mira, the fifteenth-century princess and saint of India, express the intensity of divine love in ecstatic words. In one song she says:

Dearest, come and reveal yourself to me. Life is unbearable in your absence.
Without you, my love, I am like a lotus without water and like a night without a moon.

I wander night and day in anxious suspense and the fire of separation is corroding me away. The day finds me without hunger and the night without sleep and my lips are silent, yes, indeed, I cannot utter a single word.
Come and meet me and cool this fire.
You who see into my heart of things, why pain me any more? Oh my husband dear, come for pity's sake, oh come. Mira, your servant for ages and ages, is at your feet.[1]

And the same sense of love in which body and soul are united is shown in the poems of Kabir:

Subtle is the path of love!
Therein there is no asking and no not-asking.
There one loses one's self at His feet.
There one is immersed in the joy of the seeking: plunged in the deeps of love as the fish in the water.
The lover is never slow in offering his head for his Lord's service.
Kabir declares the secret of his love.

To love and to remain as one was before this strange experience befell one is a contradiction. The nature of love is to transform the lover and his world. Love has to be tasted, eaten, and absorbed, as if it were bread, so that vital energy is released. Who can stand against such energy! Certainly not the lover himself. To say one loves, and for one's moral character to stay unaltered, is to confess to being in danger; for the energies of love, the overmastering power that it makes assailable, can be turned within for destructive purposes, and without a change from man's natural state they will inevitably be so used. To love and not to act—is that possible?

Therefore we can understand Baba's aim to be change in the name of love, to leave nothing alone, and to let nothing remain as it is. To love man in Baba's sense is to raise him to the divine, not to make life in the world easy for him, but

[1] *Mirabai.* By Anath Nath Basu (George Allen & Unwin, 1934).

to enable him to realize the unreality of the world and to give him the knowledge that it passes away. The dignity and pride of man is not to let the world pass away in the course of nature, but to transform it by his actions.

The sin is lethargy, to do nothing, to drift, to perish in self-love. Other sins are all forgiven, but that sin is not forgiven, for it is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the denial of relation between the Father and the Son, between man and God. We are lazy because we think nothing can be done, and we think nothing can be done because we refuse to believe that God has given us everything. We entertain ideas and discuss them, but ideas that remain in the realm of discussion are useless and worse than useless because they deceive us by their pseudo-reality. Ideas have to be brought to birth, which is the meaning of creative action. Through the mind they must be eaten in the stomach—that is, embraced by the will—and burned up in the heart—that is, translated into action. Otherwise thinking is mere folly, a form of miserable self-indulgence, no better than other so-called lower forms of false pleasure.

The world is made and is to be remade not by thought, unless it becomes action, nor by philosophy, unless it becomes alive in religion. Religion is the one true revolutionary force, the one irresistible energy that can upset the world, because it makes men know that they are gods—it takes them back to the beginning. That is why religions that acknowledge divinity in a remote and far-away sense, that encourage belief in another world, in God who is not man, in separation and in the affirmation of human misery, are the great enslavers of men, the anti-Christ, the teachers of the Great Lie. Revolutions that are inspired by material aims and by the belief in man as mere citizen of the world are bound ultimately to fail, for they too are the same Great Lie, because they lead only

to new crystallizations in the material order. The revolution that mankind needs is that of awakened souls, who re-create human society on the basis of the spiritual nature of humanity.

To make truth living is the only aim worthy of man. The purpose of the universe is to create self-knowledge or God-realization in every soul. The mission of the God-realized one is to free others from the illusion of the world. Those who live according to the values of the world do so by identifying themselves with their bodies, that is to say, with the world and its illusion. To free them is the task of those who awaken as Baba awakens. The help that can be given he has himself described as follows:

> The Perfect Master knows himself to be one with all the other souls in bondage; and although he knows himself to be identical with God and is thus eternally free, he also knows himself to be one with the other souls in bondage and is thus *vicariously* bound. And though he constantly experiences the eternal Bliss of God-realization, he also vicariously experiences suffering owing to the bondage of other souls, whom he knows to be his own forms. This is the meaning of Christ's Crucifixion. Although in the Perfect Master the purpose of existence is completely realized, he retains his bodies and continues to use them for the emancipation of other souls from ignorance and for helping them to attain God-consciousness.
>
> The soul in bondage is caught up in the universe, and the universe is nothing but *imagination.* But since there is no end to imagination, he is likely to wander indefinitely in the mazes of false consciousness. The Perfect Master can help him to cut short the different stages of false consciousness by revealing the Truth. In the absence of the perception of the Truth, the mind is likely to imagine all kinds of things. For example, the soul can imagine that he is a beggar or a king, a man or a woman, etc. The soul thus goes on gathering the experiences of the opposites. Where-ever there is duality, there is a *tendency to restore balance through*

the opposite. For example, if a person has the experience of being a murderer, this has to be counterbalanced by the experience of being murdered; and if the soul has the experience of being a king, this has to be counterbalanced by the experience of being a beggar.

Thus the soul may wander *ad infinitum* from one opposite to the other without being able to put an end to his false consciousness. The Perfect Master can help him to arrive at the Truth by giving him perception of the Truth and cutting short the working of his imagination which would otherwise be endless. The Perfect Master helps the soul in bondage by sowing in him the seed of God-realization, but it always takes some time for the latter to attain God-realization. Every process of growth in the universe takes time.

Thus Baba's mission is by contact with others throughout the world, not in one country but in all, to enable those he contacts to transcend nature and the world. It is awakening, it is freedom, it is to enable men to realize that boundaries are down, that there is nothing impossible, that dreams can be realized, and that what the heart most desires can be enjoyed.

Thus we can see how Baba's change of plans, his destructiveness and breaking up in the material order belong to the technique of the spiritual life. What seems most meaningless and paradoxical in what he does has the most profound meaning, though it cannot be said that the meaning is always apparent. To dare to live by the spirit is to dare to cast off from all moorings, to have no more security, to abandon oneself to the goodness of God.

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

What is that state of consciousness to which Baba is said to have attained, which is his veritable secret? It is a secret known to other men and women both in the East and the

West. The formal description of it Baba has himself given, and I will start this final section of my book by repeating it:

There are six states of consciousness:[1]

1. Latent consciousness. Here the soul in the beyond state is unconscious of the Self and the Universe.
2. Sub-conscious. Here the soul in various stages in mineral, vegetable, and animal is semi-conscious of the Universe.
3. Conscious. Here the soul as in man is conscious of the Universe but is unconscious of the subtle and mental worlds and of the Self.
4. Sub-superconscious. Here the soul, as in men who are on the spiritual path, is conscious of the Universe and also of the subtle and mental worlds though still unconscious of the Self.
5. Superconscious. Here the Soul in the I am God state is conscious of the Self, but unconscious of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds. This is the aim of all yogas and all religions. This is what is called Nirvana—divine consciousness in which man realizes or becomes God and is entirely free from the phenomenon that presents illusion as real, and in which is experienced infinite knowledge and ineffable Bliss.
6. Superconsciousness plus creation consciousness. Here the soul retaining God consciousness regains consciousness of the universe. The man who after realizing his one-ness with God gets back his gross, subtle, and mental consciousness and is conscious at the same time of his divine Self and of the universe in its true aspect, that is, nothingness. He is both God and man. He knows by actual realization that he exists as the Self of all and that the universe is a delusion.

Brief commentary on this statement is necessary. The first

[1] The seven planes of human consciousness given on pp. 37–38, are further subdivisions of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth states of consciousness explained here.

state is that of infinite possibilities. The second state is that of Nature. The third state is ordinary human consciousness, in which consciousness of what we normally call the self exists, for man says, "I am I." In the fourth state the soul arises above the conscious self, without however knowing the unconscious self, which might be called the Not-Self or the True-Self, for it is divinity. The state of superconsciousness is that in which the self is known because God is known. Glimpses of it are enjoyed by mystics and saints, by artists when they see beauty, by poets in the realms of imagination, and by philosophers and men of science when they see truth. The records of history contain ample evidences of it. The sixth state is that in which heavenly consciousness exists at the same moment as earthly consciousness, and is unchanging. That is Cosmic Consciousness, or Christ-Consciousness, or God Realization, or Gnosis. It cannot be judged or tested from the standpoint of the earth; and it does not come in flashes, but remains.

This Cosmic Consciousness or realization of infinity is the goal of human life; for that men exist. To attain it they have to pass through the different states of consciousness in the phenomenal world. When it is attained the soul is still conscious of creation, without losing God-consciousness, which is what is found in the Perfect Master, from whom we learn that what is spiritually disastrous is not the consciousness of creation but the fact that consciousness is caught up or held in creation. It is not the consciousness of the body or of the affairs of the world that is evil, but the identification with the body or the world.

The falseness of the phenomenal world consists in its not being understood as an illusory expression of the Infinite Spirit. The ignorance of the worldly man consists in taking the form as complete in itself without reference to the Infinite

Spirit. He who has cosmic consciousness realizes the truth, he is conscious of the true nature of God and of the true nature of creation: at the same time he is not conscious of duality, for he sees creation as but the changing shadow of God, the Eternal, Real Existence.

To attain this Cosmic Consciousness is the desire of atheists no less than of the pious, for every man has tasted it in the past from which he sprung, as Wordsworth in his *Intimations of Immortality* pointed out, and none altogether forgets. The shadows of it are in religious ecstasies, in art, and in love; and in every attempt to overcome the transitory world and its troubles, as in drink and drugs, there is implicit the search after the Unknown, the Eternal Happiness, and the return to God. These are blundering attempts, because those who engage in them are always brought back to the actualities of the world. Only that experience yields satisfaction in which the actualities of everyday life are caught up and dissolved—though the world remains the world—in the light of Eternal Truth. Baba said on one occasion:

> If you realize only a small portion of what I call the Highest Knowledge, you will experience great bliss. It will bring down heaven into your heart.
>
> Every object will give you joy, and will reveal the mystery of existence.

One of the most difficult lessons is to understand that we in the world have to know the spirit through the transformation of the flesh so that we may in the flesh rise above its limitations. There is a way to bliss by forsaking the flesh and the world, and by denying the arts of life, which is the way of asceticism, and there are some who can find themselves only by that way; but nature and the world have a meaning for the soul, they have no purposes of their own, and to behave as though they

did not exist or concern us is to reject the gifts of God and to refuse to acknowledge the totality of existence. Therefore what nature provides and what the world is are to be received though not treasured. To rejoice in youth and to be charmed by beauty, to be ravished by the glories of the spring and the fragrance and form of blossom, to delight in birds and animals, and to enjoy the company of friends; for the scientist to feel the exquisite happiness of achievement in research, or for the mathematician to be thrilled by the solution of a problem in mathematics, or for the craftsman to have pleasure in that which is made with his hands, are elements in the divine joy that fills infinity. Nothing is to be despised; everything is to be accepted; but we must have the wisdom not to be deceived. The secret is to be aware of values and not to have our hearts locked up in means and mechanisms, in mere sweetness and sensuous pleasures, but to know everything for what it is. Equally, we must recognize in pain and suffering, in calamities and catastrophes, and in what seems to be the rule of chance, the same divine working, the same liberation of spirit, the same opportunity of transcendence.

All other ecstasies are but shadows of the bliss of knowing the Knower. Even what the Indian philosophers call Samadhi in its inferior sense is not the same as this permanent union with God, in which God and the world are contained one in the other.

How Baba came to his consciousness we do not know, though the story is told as I have told it; but the story makes us sure that the secret is not disclosed. Never is that secret made open, as all who have received illumination take pains to say. There are no words in which to tell it, and all the records that we have are but vague, even if they are poetic,

statements of untellable truth. In April 1924 Baba made the following remark about his experience. He said:

> Just after God-realization, a man beholds countless numbers of suns, moons, stars, and planets issuing forth out of himself. He is driven to consider himself to be the source of everything.

The tremendous event, which overwhelms those who pass through it, is more than words can express.

There are certain points to be noted in such experiences. They are all arrived at during waking consciousness, not in sleep or dream. Illumination takes place in what the Catholic theologians call "the pure understanding," and is the direct action of God. To lose ourselves by dulling the senses, and to exalt ourselves by inducing physical insensibility through stimulus of emotion, are false ways to the truth. In such states what is seen is forgotten, though the taste will remain. Only in conscious perception, in full awareness, is truth found.

It is characteristic of those who experience illumination, but do not attain to full Cosmic Consciousness, to find the experience to last only for a brief period, as St. Teresa said, though it may be repeated. Yet if it occurs only once for no more than a second of time, the memory remains clearly defined, and can never afterwards be doubted. Also it is possible to recognize that the experience of illumination is the same experience with all who have it, no matter how strangely its circumstances may vary. Finally, the experience is almost always alarming and invariably sudden, though it sometimes comes without being looked for and at other times only after long searching.

To read the accounts of the Jewish patriarchs and prophets, of Arjuna, of Buddha, of Socrates, of St. Paul, of Plotinus, of the Christian mystics and saints, of Mohammed and the mystics of Islam, of Dante, of Swedenborg, of William Blake

and Walt Whitman, is to realize that they had experience of consciousness beyond that of normal human consciousness. We know nothing of the life of Shakespeare, but certainly he must have shared that experience too.

When Abraham heard the voice of the angel of the Lord as he was about to sacrifice Isaac, when Jacob saw the ladder reaching from earth to heaven, when Moses saw the fire in the bush and "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God"—what are these but illuminations?

The Jews in their intense religious ardour had many such experiences. Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite, saw fire burst out of the rock, and said, "Alas, O Lord God! forasmuch as I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not; thou shalt not die." There was that terrible prophet Elijah the Tishbite, who was fed by ravens and found God in a still small voice; but though we learn much of the deeds we are told little of his visions. Isaiah as a young man saw God in the year that King Uzziah died. He said:

> I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. And above him stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto the other, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew up one of the seraphim unto me having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he touched my mouth with it and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin

purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

The prophet Ezekiel saw the heavens opened while a captive in Babylon and had visions of God which he describes in detail. He saw, he says, four living creatures, each with four faces:

. . . And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one that spake. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet. . . .

The story that Plato makes Alcibiades tell of Socrates in the *Symposium*, instancing his long fits of abstraction, records without doubt the moment of the reception of a demoniac intimation:

One morning he was thinking about something which he could not resolve; he would not give it up, but continued thinking from early dawn till noon—there he stood, fixed in thought; and at noon attention was drawn to him, and the rumour ran through the wondering crowd that Socrates had been standing and thinking about something ever since the break of day. At last, in the evening, after supper, some Ionians out of curiosity (I should explain that this was not in winter but in summer), brought out their mats and

slept in the open air that they might watch him and see whether he would stand all night. There he stood until the following morning; and with the return of light he offered up a prayer to the sun and went his way.

Gautama Buddha, after long years of wandering, sitting under the Bodhi tree, was rewarded with a "pure and heavenly vision surpassing that of men," and found the Golden Path. Then the story is told of Arjuna, great prince and warrior, who in the heat of battle was smitten with deep compassion, and casting away bow and arrows sank down in the midst of the battlefield, his mind overcome by sorrow. To him Krishna declares the true principles of action, that for a soldier there is no better thing than to wage righteous war:

> Look upon pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and defeat as the same and prepare to fight; thus shalt thou incur no evil. . . . Thy task is not concerned with the fruits of thine act. . . . He who liveth devoid of longing, abandoning all desire, saying not to himself, this is "I" and that is "mine," he attaineth tranquillity.
>
> This state, Arjuna, is verily to have being in the Supreme God. None having attained to this suffereth delusion, and to be established therein at the end of life is to reach everlasting and absolute bliss. . . .
>
> . . . Arjuna replied to Krishna, saying: Destroyed now is my delusion, O Krishna, and through thy grace have I regained the memory of mine own perfection; I am firm, my doubts are gone, I will obey thy word.[1]

And after that he got up and fought. From this dialogue on the battlefield we get the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which is the classic document of illumination for all ages to come.

Long years afterwards we find St. Paul, the zealous persecutor of Christians, who on his journey to Damascus had a

[1] *The Song of God*: A translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. By Dhan Gopal Mukerji.

vision which struck him to the ground and made him blind for three days. "I know such a man," he said afterwards, "caught up even to the third heaven . . . he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

Moslem history is full of records of ecstasy and illumination among its poets and saints. The author of *The Dabistan, or School of Manners* says of Shídósh, a disciple of the great seventeenth-century Sufi Kaivàn, the following:

> . . . he directed his eyes opened wide between the eyebrows, which in Hindi they call terátuk, until the blessed form of Kaivàn was clearly manifested: he next contemplated that form, until it actually was never more separated from him; he at last reached the region of intellect, and having passed through the six worlds, arrived in the seventh, and in this state of entrancement obtained admittance to the Almighty presence; so that during this abstraction from self, the annihilation (of everything human) and the eternity (of the spiritual) was joined to his existence. . . . One morning at the dawn of day he said thus to the author of *The Dabistan*: "Yesterday in the gloom of night, directed by the light of spirit, I departed from this external body and arrived at the mysterious illumination ever replete with effulgence: the chamberlain of truth removed before me the curtains, so that on quitting this mortal nature and leaving the invisible world I traversed the angelic sphere. The supreme independently existing light of lights became revealed in all the impressive, operative, attributive, and essential radiance of glory; this state of imaginary being disappeared, actual existence was clearly witnessed.[1]

To return to Christian records, in the thirteenth century the Blessed Angela of Foligno, member of the third order of St. Francis, said:

[1] *The Dabistan.* Translated by David Shea and Anthony Troyer (1843), vol. i, pp. 126–7.

My eyes are opened, I saw a fullness of God in which the whole world was comprehended.... And my soul marvellously clamoured, this world is pregnant with God.

Dante's vision of the "blessed one," his beloved Beatrice in his *La Divina Commedia*, is the heavenly vision.

Is there any story more moving than that of Saint Ignatius of Loyola? He, gentleman and soldier, lover and man of the world, recovering from a leg shattered in battle, had a vision of St. Peter, and afterwards with his mind still on worldly affairs "saw clearly the image of Our Lady with the Holy Child, at whose sight for a notable time he felt a surpassing sweetness, which eventually left him with such a loathing for his past sins, and especially for those of the flesh, that every unclean imagination seemed blotted out from his soul. . . ." And at that moment there was a great shock felt throughout the castle, the windows of his room were broken, and a large hole appeared in the wall. From that time the supernatural life was revealed in ecstasy to this strange soldier.

There is no need for me to quote from the mystics, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, Tauler, Boehme, or Eckhart, or even Swedenborg; nor to the poets, of whom one "saw Eternity the other night," and another, William Blake, saw angels in a tree and when the sun arose saw a multitude of the heavenly host. I refer the reader to them; yet I must draw attention to a few less familiar and comparatively recent instances.

Henry David Thoreau, friend of Emerson, poet, and devoted supporter of the liberation of slaves, said in his best-known book, *Walden*, written when he was a young man:

I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighbourhood of

man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain, while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once, like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantage of human neighbourhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in the scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanest was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again.

Another and greater American in his achievement, Walt Whitman, who sang the song of the universal, of the new America and of "myself," had a spiritual vision one morning in June, when he lay in the fields and saw suddenly the meaning of his life and the world. He was reticent about what happened, but he knew that he had found himself. He said:

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud,
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,

And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd
universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and
composed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God
and about death.)
I hear and behold God in every object yet understand God not
in the least,
Nor can I understand who there can be more wonderful than
myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four and each
moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in
the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd
by God's name.
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

There was a follower of Whitman's, an Englishman, Edward Carpenter, once a clergyman, then a university extension lecturer, a poet and traveller, who as a result of illumination changed entirely his way of life, took to working on the land and with his hands, and lived with working men. He wrote *Towards Democracy* in a mood of illuminant splendour, of which he said:

If I should be asked—as I have sometimes been asked—what is the exact nature of this mood. . . . I should have to reply that I can give no answer. The whole of *Towards Democracy* is an en-

deavour to give it utterance. . . . All I can say is that there seems to be a vision possible to man, as from some more universal standpoint, free from obscurity and localism which specially connect themselves with the passing clouds of desire, fear, and all ordinary thought and emotion; in that sense another and separate faculty; and a vision always means a sense of light, so here is a sense of inward light, unconnected of course with the mortal eye, but bringing to the eye of the mind the impression that it *sees*, and by means of the medium which washes, as it were, the *interior* surfaces of all objects and things and persons—how can I express it? And yet this is most defective, for the sense is a sense that one *is* those objects and things and persons that one perceives (and the whole universe)—a sense in which sight and touch and hearing are all fused in identity. Nor can the matter be understood without realizing that the whole faculty is deeply and intimately rooted in the ultra-moral and emotional nature, and beyond the thought-region of the brain.

The experience of that most ruthless of anti-Christians, Friedrich Nietzsche, on a day in August 1881, out of which he wrote the great prophecy of the modern world *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, indicates the same class of illumination as that which the saints have had. In *Ecce Homo* he wrote:

If one had the smallest vestige of superstition left in one, it would hardly be possible completely to set aside the idea that one is the mere incarnation, mouthpiece, or medium of an almighty power. The idea of revelation, in the sense that something which profoundly convulses and upsets one becomes suddenly visible and audible with indescribable certainty and accuracy—describes the simple fact. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives: a thought suddenly flashes up like lightning, it comes with necessity, without faltering—I have never had any choice in the matter. There is an ecstasy so great that the immense strain of it is sometimes relaxed by a flood of tears, during which one's steps now involuntarily rush and anon involuntarily lag.

There is the feeling that one is utterly out of hand, at the very distinct consciousness of an endless number of fine thrills and titillations descending to one's very toes; there is a depth of happiness in which the most painful and gloomy parts do not act as antitheses to the rest, but are produced and required as necessary shades of colour in such an overflow of light. . . . Everything happens quite involuntarily, as if in a tempestuous outburst of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, and divinity. . . .

The story of a pilgrimage and initiation in Tibet fifty years ago is told in *The Holy Mountain* by Bhagwan Shri Hamsa,[1] a remarkable account of initiation on the frozen lake Gauri kund, 20,000 feet above the sea, where Bhagwan sat for three days and nights without food, frozen and covered with snow, determined to see his Lord or die. There he was "initiated into the realization of the Self." He says:

I found myself reflected everywhere in the whole Universe! It was all one harmony—full of Wisdom, Infinite Love Perennial, and Bliss Eternal.

The book is a strange and beautiful piece of writing, and I leave this brief record of higher consciousness with this almost contemporary account.

We observe that an experience is repeated in different men at different times and places, and always it is the lifting of veils, the opening of sight, the intensification of light, the revelation of unity, and the sense of eternal existence. And yet we have to understand that it is possible to distinguish between these experiences, as I have already shown. The poets' experience is that of divine inspiration. The vision of saints is a higher experience than that of the poets. Still higher is the illumination of seers, while the culmination of experience

[1] Translated by Shri Purohit Swami. With an Introduction by W. B. Yeats, 1934.

is that of Self-realization. In illumination man sees God. In Self-realization God sees Himself. It is this experience that is properly to be called Cosmic Consciousness or Christ Consciousness, wherein the soul becomes identified with the Infinite. It is this experience, which is not fluctuating, not momentary, not a flash of light in the darkness, which is not of time but of eternity.

It is not possible to discuss here any further what that experience is. It is not mere intellectual certainty; neither is it mere vision—the truth seen; it is realized certainty—the truth made one with us. To reach that experience, to live in it, must be the heart's desire. Neither is it my object at this time to discuss how it should be attained. Meditation is necessary, and contemplation, and the readiness to surrender the values of this world; also the recognition of others, forgiveness and love without conditions.

The way is different for each man. Each has to work out his own salvation. Each makes his own path. The longing that is everywhere to end the terrible chaos and misery of the world is the longing for this infinite knowledge, and the more intense the suffering of mankind the more intense is that longing for divinity. It is not suffering and longing that are to be avoided, or that should cause us to despair, but indifference and callousness. In the present pain of the world there is hope; for it is the sign of man striving to become more than man; it is evidence of new life; it is the dark moment before the light breaks through. When we awake, we are told, we shall know as we are known. That is the illumination in which the problems of politics, economics, and sex will be solved, and in which new energy is available for new creation. To awaken . . . so that the way is there and everything can be risked upon it. . . . "I have come to awaken," says Baba.

To acknowledge the existence of Cosmic Consciousness is to realize the brink of abysses upon which man lives. The experiences of the prophets, saints, and poets with their intimations of immortality cannot lightly be dismissed, yet to entertain them is in itself a daring act. They suggest unmistakably that in the spiritual life there is no safety to be reached, no security to be gained, no pact that can guarantee us. Nothing but commitment will do. Yet on this brink of danger is the greatest joy, the way becomes clear, doubts disappear, and bliss is ours.

There is an invitation and also a warning. One who read the signature of heaven in all creation said that no one should meddle with such matters unless he was ready to seek to become "a new man born in God."[1] There was another seer who said long before:

> Therefore do not claim gnosis, lest thou perish in thy pretension, but cleave to the reality thereof, that thou mayest be saved. When anyone is harrowed by the revelation of the Divine majesty, his existence becomes a plague to him and all his attributes a source of corruption. He who belongs to God and to whom God belongs is not connected with anything in the universe. The real gist of gnosis is to recognize that to God is the kingdom.[2]

What is the practical significance of this experience to which I have referred but that if we accept the truth that man is a spiritual being we must revise all human aims, individual and social, and all existing values, political and personal, in the light of it? Is it too much to say that only when that is done will there be clarity in human motives, and that only then will the stored-up energies of the spirit of man be released for creative delight? I finish with the words of John

[1] Jacob Boehme: *The Signature of All Things*, Everyman Edition, p. 161.
[2] *The Kashf Al-Mahjúb.* Translated by R. A. Nicholson. London, 1911.

Donne, who said, "We have the image of God at home. . . . The masterpiece is our own, in our own bosom."

Apart from the reference to Messiahship, I have said nothing in this book as to the relation of Baba as Perfect Master to Jesus Christ, and, as I have said, it does not form part of my design to discuss the subject; but I feel that I cannot ignore it, though misunderstanding about words is difficult to avoid in a brief consideration of such a matter, and I realize that I invite some risk of misunderstanding in venturing to say anything at all. Yet to be silent would be absurd.

The reader will observe that no mention is made of the recorded experiences of Jesus Christ in the short account of illuminations that I have given. The reason is that little as we know of such experiences when they befall other men, we know less of Jesus Christ's. The Baptism in the Jordan, and the Temptation in the Wilderness that followed, are integral elements in an event that starts with the announcement of Jesus's birth to the Virgin Mary, and includes the illumination of St. John the Baptist.

That Jesus had what we call Cosmic Consciousness is certain, for that is what is meant by his being both true God and true Man; but to say that is not the end of what has to be said about him. His part in the world history of mankind is unique; but even to say that is not sufficient, for the part of every individual man is unique, uniqueness being the very nature of individuality. How then can I put into words what I feel about the historic significance of Jesus Christ? I can say no more, in a few words, but that he was not one in a supposed long line of Masters or Christs or illuminated ones, who appear from time to time in the world. Christ's life and death were a turning-point in human destiny; he left nothing as it was before, for he made the old world new in the darkness

that fell upon the earth as he died upon the cross. We have not seen the new world, for Christianity has not revealed it, but those who reach Cosmic Consciousness, or what is better called Christ Consciousness, have seen and know it. That is the only knowledge worth having, the Gnosis that includes all knowledge. Therefore the relation of Baba to Jesus Christ is certain, though it remains no less a mystery: in it nothing is claimed, everything is witnessed, "not I but Christ," not the separate self but the Universal Self, "one in Christ" in the deepest mystery.

People ask about Jesus Christ: Was he genuine? Was he self-deluded? To what extent did he deceive those who followed him? To the Jew to this day Jesus was false, a deceiver, a lamentable misleader of men. But to every Jew, as to all, Jesus Christ is none the less a challenge. He is a challenge as one who bids us break away from the world and make a fresh beginning. Mahommed said, "I am only a man like unto you"[1]; but Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Likewise, Baba says, "I am God." These are astounding words, meant not to elevate the speaker but to cut into the solid self-satisfaction of those who see in life no sign of divinity, or to spur those who stand timidly uncertain. When Baba utters these strange and, to many ears, dreadful words it is intended that those who hear them should ask themselves, "What does it mean to be God?" What does it mean to be a man? Baba puts that piercing question to the soul of man sunk deep in the illusions of the world. Ah, let us sleep no longer, the time for ease has ended, the new day is here. Who are you, appalled by the tasks of life, whose world is overhung by threatening fate, whose powers seem so small, who are so lonely? The answer is, Son of man, stand upon thy feet. . . .

[1] Qur-àn, xviii, 110.

All things are possible. The answer is, Be ye perfect . . . I am with you.

I have come to the end of what I had to say about Baba, the silent one. He unfolds no new system of thought, no new religion, no new philosophy, no new social order. What does he signify? The wisdom of ages is stored in the libraries of the world and in the memory of mankind. What remains is action: to turn over, to change, to make a leap forward, not to wait any longer, not even for instruction, certainly not for permission, but to do it.

APPENDIX

I

MEDITATION

"MEDITATION," says Shri Meher Baba, "is one of the ways which lead the aspirant to the Divine Path. For those who are in contact with a God-realized Master, meditation is unnecessary. It is enough for them to be under his guidance and to have love for him. Also for the few who are in an advanced spiritual state, this preliminary process is unnecessary; while those rare Beings, who are self-realized, *themselves* become the object of meditation."

MEDITATION AND CONCENTRATION

Meditation, according to Baba, should be carefully distinguished from concentration. He says that meditation is the first stage of a process which gradually develops into concentration. It consists of "thorough thinking about a particular subject to the exclusion of every other irrelevant subject," while concentration is a natural process of fixing the mind upon one particular thing, in which there is the peaceful intermingling of love and longing for the object of concentration (and not a mere *mechanical* process, in which there is a regular, drill-like, rigid monotony). Further, the subject-matter of meditation, like the object of concentration, cannot consist of a single *form*, or a pithy and terse *formula*, but must consist of a reasoned exposition.

Thus, those who are not gifted with the capacity of intense concentration have to begin with meditation, whereas for those who are gifted with the capacity of concentration, meditation is unnecessary. "It is sufficient," says Baba, "if they concentrate their minds on the mere form of a God-man,[1] or some simple formula such as 'I am neither *Sharira* (gross body), nor *Prana* (the subtle

[1] Or Perfect Master.

body, which is the seat of desires and vital forces), nor *Manas* (mental body, which is the seat of the mind); I am *Atman* (soul).'"

CONDITIONS OF INTELLIGENT MEDITATION

Meditation has often been misunderstood as a *mechanical* process of forcing the mind upon some idea or object. It is, therefore, natural that most people should find great difficulty in their attempts to coerce the mind in a particular direction, or pin it down to one particular thing. Any purely mechanical treatment of the mind is not only irksome but is ultimately bound to be unsuccessful.

The first principle which those who aspire to meditation should remember is that the mind can be controlled and directed in meditation *only according to the laws inherent in the make-up of the mind itself*, and not by the application of any mechanical or semi-mechanical force.

Many persons who do not technically "meditate" are oftentimes found to be deeply and intensely engrossed in systematic and clear thinking about some practical problem or theoretical subject, and their mental process is, in a sense, very much like meditation, inasmuch as the mind is engrossed in intense thinking about a particular subject-matter to the exclusion of all other irrelevant matters. The reason why meditation is often easy and spontaneous in such mental process is that the mind is dwelling upon a subject in which it is interested, which it increasingly understands. But the spiritual tragedy about ordinary trains of thoughts is that they are not directed towards that which really matters. On the other hand, *the object of meditation has always to be carefully selected*, and must be spiritually important. It has to be some divine person or object, or some spiritually significant theme or Truth. But to attain success in meditation, we must not only get the mind *interested* in the divine subjects or truths, we must also begin by trying to *understand and appreciate them*. Such intelligent meditation is a natural process of the mind; it avoids the monotonous rigidity and regularity of mechanical meditation. It becomes, therefore, not only spontaneous and inspiring, but easy and successful.

Appendix

THE NEW FORM OF MEDITATION

Since intelligent meditation consists in thorough thinking about a particular subject, it follows that the best help for meditation would be a brief and clear exposition of the object of meditation. Shri Meher Baba, has, therefore, dictated a concise exposition of the Divine Theme, which follows: it comprises the story of creation, as well as a complete account of the Path and the Goal of Self-realization.

The process of meditation which Baba recommends has three stages:—

1. In the first stage, the aspirant will have to *read* the exposition daily, and simultaneously *think* about it thoroughly.

2. In the second stage, actual reading becomes unnecessary, but the subject-matter of the exposition will be *mentally revived* and *thought over constantly*.

3. In the third stage, it will be unnecessary for the mind to revive the words or the thoughts in the exposition separately and consecutively, and all *discursive* thinking about the subject-matter will come to an end. At this stage of meditation, the mind will no longer be occupied with any trains of thought, but will have a *clear, spontaneous, and intuitive perception of the sublime Truth* which is expressed in the exposition.

ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW METHOD

The difficulties which aspirants experience in connection with meditation are either (*a*) due to the unwieldiness or vagueness of the subject-matter of meditation, or (*b*) due to some flaw in the method which makes it mechanical and uninspiring, or (*c*) due to the fact that the method of meditation is not adapted to the subject-matter of meditation. The form of meditation which Baba recommends avoids all these causes which vitiate meditation and make it unsuccessful.

The following new form of meditation is one in which the process of meditation as well as its subject-matter are specially adapted to the requirements of intelligent meditation; it is ex-

tremely easy and useful, owing to the fact that *reading* of the subject-matter and *thinking* about it have to be done *simultaneously*. Further, in making the exposition of the subject-matter clear and concise, Baba has eliminated the probability of any disturbance owing to irrelevant thoughts, which are almost unavoidable when the exposition is unnecessarily long-drawn. It is extremely difficult to avoid the disturbance of irrelevant thoughts while meditating upon the subject-matter of some long-drawn-out article or book, even if it is committed to memory; and spontaneous meditation about it, therefore, becomes impracticable.

Further, the appearance of irrelevant thoughts in the mind becomes very probable not only in a long-drawn-out meditation of *abstract thoughts*, but also in a meditation of some *concrete object of experience*. On the contrary, irrelevant thoughts are extremely improbable if the subject-matter of meditation consists of a *brief exposition of the Super-sensible Truth*.

It is therefore expected that, if aspirants sincerely meditate upon the subject-matter of the following exposition (in the manner which has been indicated above), meditation will become spontaneous and easy. They will thus be taking a very important step towards the realization of the goal of life.

THE DIVINE THEME FOR MEDITATION

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL TO THE OVER-SOUL

(through creation)

By SHRI MEHER BABA

THE SOUL AND ITS ILLUSION

Atman or the soul is in reality identical with Paramatman or the Over-soul,[1] which is One, Infinite and Eternal. The soul is, in fact, beyond the gross, subtle, and mental worlds;[2] but it experiences

[1] See Note A.

[2] See Note C.

itself as being limited owing to its identification with the *Sharira* or the gross body, *Prana* or the subtle body (which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces), or *Manas* or the mental body[1] (which is the seat of the mind). The soul, in its transcendental state, is *One*, *Formless*, *Eternal*, and *Infinite*, and yet it comes to identify itself with the phenomenal world of *forms* which are *many* and *finite* and *destructible*. This is Maya or the Cosmic illusion.

STATES OF THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

The phenomenal world of finite objects is *utterly illusory* and *false*. It has three states: (1) the *gross*, (2) the *subtle*, and (3) the *mental*. Although all these three states of the world are false, they represent different *degrees of falseness*. Thus, the gross world is farthest from Truth (God); the subtle world is nearer Truth; and the mental world is nearest Truth. But all the three states of the world owe their existence to the cosmic illusion, which the soul has to transcend before it realizes the Truth.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

We have here to discover the purpose of creation. The sole purpose of creation is that the soul should be able to enjoy the Infinite state of the Over-soul consciously. Although the soul eternally exists in and with the Over-soul in an inviolable unity, *it cannot be conscious of this unity* independently of the creation which is within the limitations of time. It must, therefore, evolve consciousness before it can realize its true status and nature as being identical with the Infinite Over-soul, which is One without a second. The evolution of consciousness required the duality of the subject and the object—the centre of consciousness and the environment (i.e. the world of forms).

THE GENESIS OF THE COSMIC ILLUSION

We are here faced with the problem of accounting for the cosmic illusion which is caused by the world of forms. How does the soul

[1] See Note B.

get caught up in the illusion? How did the Formless, Infinite, and Eternal Soul come to experience itself as having form, and as being finite and destructible? How did the *Purusha* or the Supreme Spirit come to think of itself as *Prakrati* or the world of nature? In other words, what is the cause of the cosmic illusion in which the soul finds itself?

To realize the Over-soul which is One, Indivisible, Real, and Infinite, the soul has first to become conscious. The soul's first consciousness, however, is not of *God* but of the *Universe*; not of the *Over-soul* but of its *shadows*; not of the *one* but of *many*; not of the *infinite* but of the *finite*; not of the *Eternal* but of the *transitory*. Thus, the soul, instead of realizing the Over-soul, gets itself involved in the cosmic illusion, and hence, though really Infinite, it comes to experience itself as finite. In other words, when the soul develops consciousness, it does not become conscious of its own true nature but of the phenomenal world which is its own shadow.

ORGANIC EVOLUTION AND DEGREES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In order to become conscious of the phenomenal world, the soul must assume some form (as its medium) for experiencing the world; and the degree and the kind of consciousness are determined by the nature of the form which is used as a medium. The soul first becomes conscious of the gross world by assuming a gross body. The consciousness of the gross world which it has in the beginning is of the most partial and rudimentary type; and correspondingly the soul assumes the most undeveloped form (e.g. that of stone), with which evolution begins. The driving force of evolution is constituted by the momentum which consciousness receives owing to the conservations of the impressions (sanskaras) left by diverse desires or conations. Thus the sanskaras cultivated in a particular form have to be worked out and fulfilled through the medium of a *higher* form and a correspondingly more developed consciousness of the gross world; and the soul, therefore, has to assume higher and higher forms (like metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird, and

animal) until at last it assumes a human form, in which it develops *full consciousness* (i.e. all the aspects of knowing, feeling, and willing) of the gross world.

THE DRIVING FORCE OF EVOLUTION

The manner in which sanskaras result in the evolution of consciousness and the corresponding form has a useful analogy in ordinary experience. If a man has the desire to act the part of a king on the stage, he can only experience it by actually putting on the garb of a king and going to the stage. The same is the case with other aspirations and desires, which can only be worked out and fulfilled by bringing about an actual change in the entire situation and the medium through which the situation can be adequately experienced. The function of the sanskaras in bringing about the evolution of consciousness and its corresponding form is *not conscious* as in the above analogy; but the parallel will be very suggestive in understanding the driving force of evolution, which is not mechanical but teleological.

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE FORM

The sanskaras are not only responsible for the evolution of the form (body) and the kind of consciousness connected with it, but they are also responsible for the riveting of consciousness to the phenomenal world. They make emancipation of consciousness (i.e. the withdrawal of consciousness from the phenomenal world to the soul itself) impossible at the sub-human stage and difficult at the human level. Since consciousness clings to the previous sanskaras, and since experience of the phenomenal world is conditioned by the use of an adequate form (body) as a medium, the soul, at every stage of evolution, comes to identify itself with the form (for example, stone, metal, vegetable, animal, etc.). Thus the soul, which is, in reality, Infinite and Formless, comes to experience itself as finite, that is, thinks of itself as being a stone, or a metal or a vegetable, a worm or a fish, a bird or an animal, *according to the degree* of the development of consciousness; and

finally, while experiencing the gross world through the human form, the soul thinks that it is a human being.

REINCARNATION AND THE LAW OF KARMA

The soul develops *full* consciousness in the human form, and therefore there is no need for any further evolution of the gross form (body). The evolution of forms, therefore, comes to an end with the attainment of the human form; and to experience the sanskaras cultivated in the human form, the soul has to *reincarnate* again and again in the human forms. The innumerable human forms, through which the soul has to pass, are determined by the Law of Karma, or the nature of its previous sanskaras (i.e. according as the sanskaras are of virtue or vice, happiness or misery, etc.); and thus, while experiencing the gross world, the soul *identifies itself with the gross body*, which is destructible, although, in reality, it (soul) is itself Eternal.

THE SUBTLE AND THE MENTAL BODIES

While developing full consciousness of the gross world in the human form, the soul *simultaneously* develops the subtle and the mental bodies; but as long as its consciousness is confined to the gross world alone, it cannot use these bodies *consciously* in wakefulness. It becomes conscious of these bodies and the corresponding worlds only when its "full consciousness" turns *inwards*, i.e. towards itself. When the soul is conscious of the subtle world through the subtle body, it identifies itself with the subtle body, and when it is conscious of the mental world through the mental body, it identifies itself with the mental body, just as when it is conscious of the gross world through the gross body, it identifies itself with the gross body.

THE PATH

The homeward journey of the soul consists in freeing itself from the illusion of being identical with its bodies (gross, subtle, and mental). When the attention of the soul turns towards self-know-

ledge and self-realization, there is a gradual loosening and disappearance of the sanskaras which keep the consciousness turned towards and riveted to the phenomenal world. The disappearance of the sanskaras proceeds side by side with the piercing through the veil of the cosmic illusion, and the soul not only begins to transcend the different states of the phenomenal world, but begins to know itself to be different from its bodies. The Path begins when the soul tries to find itself and turns its "full consciousness" towards Truth (God).

At the first stage, the soul becomes totally unconscious of its gross body and of the gross world, and experiences the subtle world through the medium of its subtle body, with which it identifies itself. In the second stage, the soul is totally unconscious of its gross and subtle bodies and also of the gross and subtle worlds, and experiences the mental world through the medium of its mental body, with which it now identifies itself. At this stage the soul may be said to be face to face with God or the Over-soul, which it realizes as being Infinite. But even while it recognizes the Infinity of the Over-soul, which it *objectifies*, it looks upon itself as being finite because of its identification with the mind or mental body.

Thus, we have the *paradox* that *the soul, which, in reality, is Infinite, sees its Infinite state, but still continues to regard itself as finite*, because, while seeing it, *it looks upon itself as the mind.* It imagines itself to be the mind, and looks upon the object of the mind as the Over-soul; and further, it not only entertains the longing to be one with the objectified Over-soul, but also tries hard to fulfil that longing.

THE GOAL

In the third stage, the "full consciousness" of the soul is drawn even still further inwards (i.e. towards itself), and it ceases to identify itself even with the mental body. Thus, in the third and the last stage (which is the goal), the soul *ceases to identify itself with any of the three bodies* (mental, subtle, and gross), which it had to

develop for evolving full consciousness; and now it not only knows itself to be formless and beyond all the bodies and worlds, but also realizes, with full consciousness, its own unity with the Over-soul, which is One, Indivisible, Real, and Infinite. And in this realization of the Truth, it enjoys "Infinite Bliss, Peace, Power, and Knowledge," which is the real state of the Over-soul.

SUMMARY

In the beginning, the soul was unconscious of its identity with the Over-soul, and hence, though a part and parcel of the Over-soul, it could not realize its own identity with it, or experience Infinite Peace, Bliss, Power, and Knowledge, because it had not evolved consciousness. Even after the evolution of consciousness, it cannot realize the state of the Over-soul (although it is all the time in and with the Over-soul), because its consciousness is confined to the phenomenal world owing to the sanskaras connected with the evolution of consciousness. And even on the Path, the soul is not conscious of itself, but it is conscious only of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds, which are its own "illusory shadows." But at the end of the Path, the soul *frees itself from all sanskaras and desires* connected with the gross, subtle, and mental worlds; and it becomes possible for it to *free itself from the illusion of being finite*, which comes into existence owing to its identification with the gross, subtle, and mental bodies. At this stage, the soul completely transcends the phenomenal world and becomes *self-conscious and self-realized.* For attaining this goal, the soul must retain its "full consciousness," and at the same time know itself to be different from the *Sharira* (gross body), *Prana* (subtle body, which is the vehicle of desires and vital forces), and *Manas* (mental body, which is the seat of the mind); and also as being *beyond* the gross, subtle, and mental worlds.

It follows, therefore, that the soul has gradually to emancipate itself from the illusion of being finite by (1) *liberating itself from the bondage of the sanskaras, and* (2) *knowing itself to be different from its bodies* (gross, subtle, and mental). It thus annihilates the *false*

ego (i.e. the illusion that "I am the gross body; I am the subtle body, or I am the mental body.") While the soul thus frees itself from its illusion, it still retains "full consciousness," which now results in *self-knowledge* and *realization of the Truth.* To escape through the cosmic illusion and to realize, with full consciousness, its identity with the Infinite Over-soul is the goal of the long journey of the soul.

NOTES

(A) "Over-soul" is the English equivalent of the Sanskrit term "*Paramatman*," which means "*God, whose cosmic and universal life embraces all things.*"

(B) The Mental body is often called *Karana Sharira* or the causal body, because it stores within itself the seeds or the causes of all the desires. The mind retains all impressions and dispositions (i.e. sanskaras) in a latent form. The limited "I" or the ego is composed of sanskaras. However, the actual manifestation of sanskaras in consciousness (i.e. the different mental processes) takes place in the subtle body.

(C) Nature is much more than what a man can perceive through the ordinary senses of his physical body. The hidden aspects of Nature consist of finer matter and forces. There is no unbridgable gulf separating the finer aspects of Nature from its gross aspect. They all interpenetrate one another and exist together. The finer aspects of Nature are not perceptible to man, but they are, nevertheless, continuous with the gross aspect, which is perceptible to him. They are not remote; and yet they are inaccessible to his consciousness. This is due to the fact that his consciousness is functioning through the physical senses, which are not adapted for perceiving those aspects of Nature which are finer than the gross aspect. He is unconscious of those "inner planes" just as a deaf

man is unconscious of sounds; and naturally he cannot also deal with them consciously. For all practical purposes, therefore, they are for him other *worlds*.

The finer and hidden part of Nature has two important divisions, viz., the subtle and the mental, *corresponding to the subtle and mental bodies of man*. The whole of Nature might, therefore, be conveniently divided into three parts—(i) the gross world, (ii) the subtle world, and (iii) the mental world. The plane on which one can possess *physical consciousness* is the gross world. The plane on which one can possess *the consciousness of desires* is the subtle world. And the plane on which the soul can have *mental consciousness* is the mental world. The *source of desire* is to be found in the mind which is on this (mental) plane. Here, the seed of desire is attached to the mind (i.e. the desire exists here in an involved form just in the same way as the tree is latent in the seed). The ordinary man is only conscious of the gross world; but as he advances on the path, he develops certain capacities which are latent in him, and by means of which he can consciously experience the subtle and the mental worlds also.

APPENDIX

II

THE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION

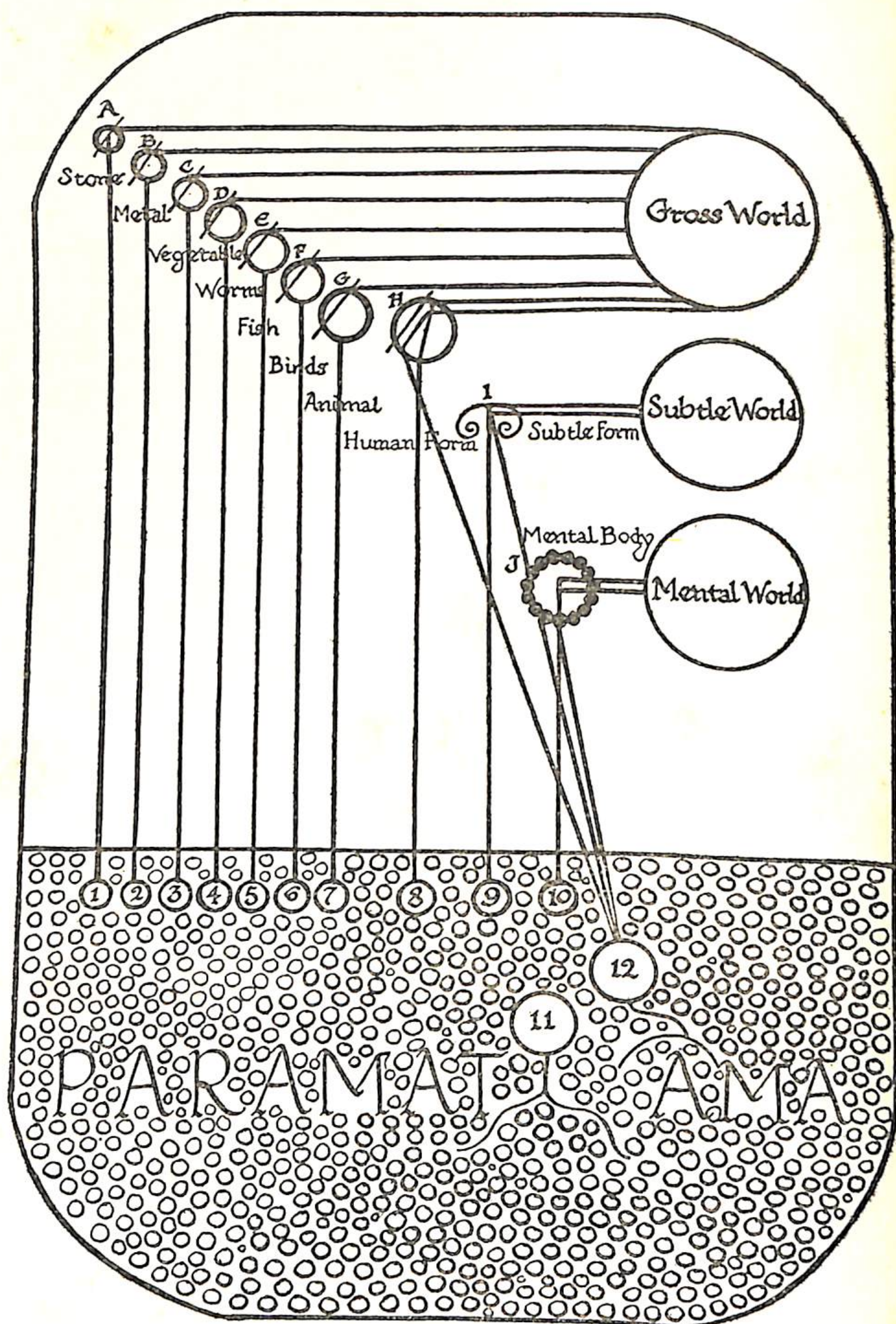
By Shri Meher Baba

The Infinite Ocean of Knowledge, Power, and Bliss, i.e. Paramatman, contains innumerable drops, individual souls, or Atmans. Although the Atmans, as drops, are in reality one with the limitless Ocean of Knowledge, Power, and Bliss, they are not, however, conscious of their Real Self. To achieve this self-consciousness, the whole creation is precipitated and the individual Atman takes form. To trace the journey of the Atman understandingly, through the evolutionary labyrinth, to its culmination in self-realization, the diagram on the following page will help. For clarity of description, the individual Atmans (in the diagram) are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., and the corresponding forms of the Atman are denoted as A, B, C, D, E, etc.

Now, the first gross form that Atman (1) took was that of stone (A). In course of time, through the evolutionary process, stone (A) evolved into metal (B). Herein the Atman may be styled Atman (2), and this never-ceasing process of gross evolution is carried through vegetation, worms, fishes, birds, and animals, ending with the human form (H), corresponding with Atman (8).

It should be borne in mind that Atman (1), in the gross form (A), as stated above, although in reality one with the limitless Ocean, i.e. the Paramatman, has lost consciousness of its Real Self, having identified itself with its gross form (A), and is thus finitely conscious of the gross world only. Similar with Atmans 2, 3, 4, etc., which are lost to their Real Self, having identified themselves with their respective gross forms B, C, D, etc., and are increasingly gross-conscious only, experiencing nothing but the gross world.

In the human form (H), the evolution of form and consciousness


A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
Stone
Metal
Vegetable
Worms
Fish
Birds
Animal
Human Form
1
Subtle Form
Gross World
Subtle World
Mental Body
J
Mental World
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
PARAMATAMA

is complete, and the Atman (8), which, up to now may be said to have evolved mediums of consciousness involuntarily, henceforth enters the stage of conscious effort in the direction of self-realization. This marks the return journey of the Atman leading to the knowledge of its Real Self, i.e. the Paramatman. Unlike the progress up to the human form, wherein the Atman was identifying itself with its gross forms, and through them as mediums was experiencing the gross worlds only, the return journey has special features, which should be carefully followed.

On the first stage of the journey, the Atman which we designate (9), still unconscious of its Real Self, identifies itself with the subtle body, utilizing it to experience the subtle world only, oblivious to its Real Self, the gross world, and the mental world.

The second stage denotes Atman (10) identifying itself with the mental body and through it experiencing the mental world. Here, the Atman is completely forgetful of its Real Self, as also the gross and subtle worlds. On this plane, the wayfarer is termed Vali in Sufi language, and, because of the immediate proximity of this stage to the Infinite Ocean of Divinity, the wayfarer may be said to have seen Paramatman or God, while he experiences the relative existence of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds as emanating from God or as having their being in God. With all that, the Vali or the individual Atman (10) is unaware of his original Self, the Paramatman.

The last stage on the journey is that of Atman (11), which has fully realized its Real Self, is drowned in the Infinite Ocean of Knowledge, Power, and Bliss, and, being identified with the Infinite Paramatman, is totally unconscious of the gross, subtle, and mental worlds. Thus, persons in this stage are unaware of their physical existence, hence their frequently observed nude condition and utter disregard of bodily requirements.

The most exalted state of the Atman is that of Atman (12), the Sadguru state, which not only ends with the realization of Self, but results in the experience of Paramatman, manifesting itself as many. Here, in the Sadguru or Perfect Master state, the Atman,

besides realizing its Real Self, is able to experience the gross, subtle, and mental bodies.

In this state the individual Atman (12), with the Infinite knowledge at its command, is able to know and judge the needs and requirements of the innumerable Atmans struggling through the different stages of evolution, and with the help of the Infinite power, pulls them towards higher spheres or categories for which they seem fitted in the light of their previous experience or existence. For instance, Atman in (A) is pushed forward to (B), and Atman in (B) is pushed forward to (C), and so on. Up to the human form (H), side by side with organic and inorganic evolution, there is a gradual awakening or unfoldment of consciousness, which gets perfected in human form. Hereafter, the Sadguru, or Perfect Master, merely changes the direction or outlook of the consciousness of human beings from gross to subtle, from subtle to mental, and from mental to Divine.

The method of working described above obtains when the Sadguru or Perfect Master is working universally in Maya, and a general spiritual push to mankind is required; but, in some exceptional instances, the Sadguru is capable of enabling Atman to slip over intermediate stages. Particularly with members of his Circle the Sadguru or Perfect Master pulls them up from the human state, and transforms them into the likeness of Himself. Here the Sadguru, or Perfect Master, utilizes his Infinite Knowledge and Power for the progress and uplift of struggling Atmans, simultaneously enjoying the state of Infinite Bliss.

In short, Atman when conscious of the gross body through (A) to (H) experiences the gross world only; when conscious of its subtle body through (I), experiences the subtle world only; when conscious of its mental body through (J), experiences the mental world only; when conscious of Self through its Self, experiences Paramatman only; and when conscious of its Self and its three vehicles, experiences the Paramatman; and through Paramatman and His Infinite Power and with the medium of the three vehicles, helps to redeem the innumerable souls caught up in the maze of gross, subtle, and mental consciousness.

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